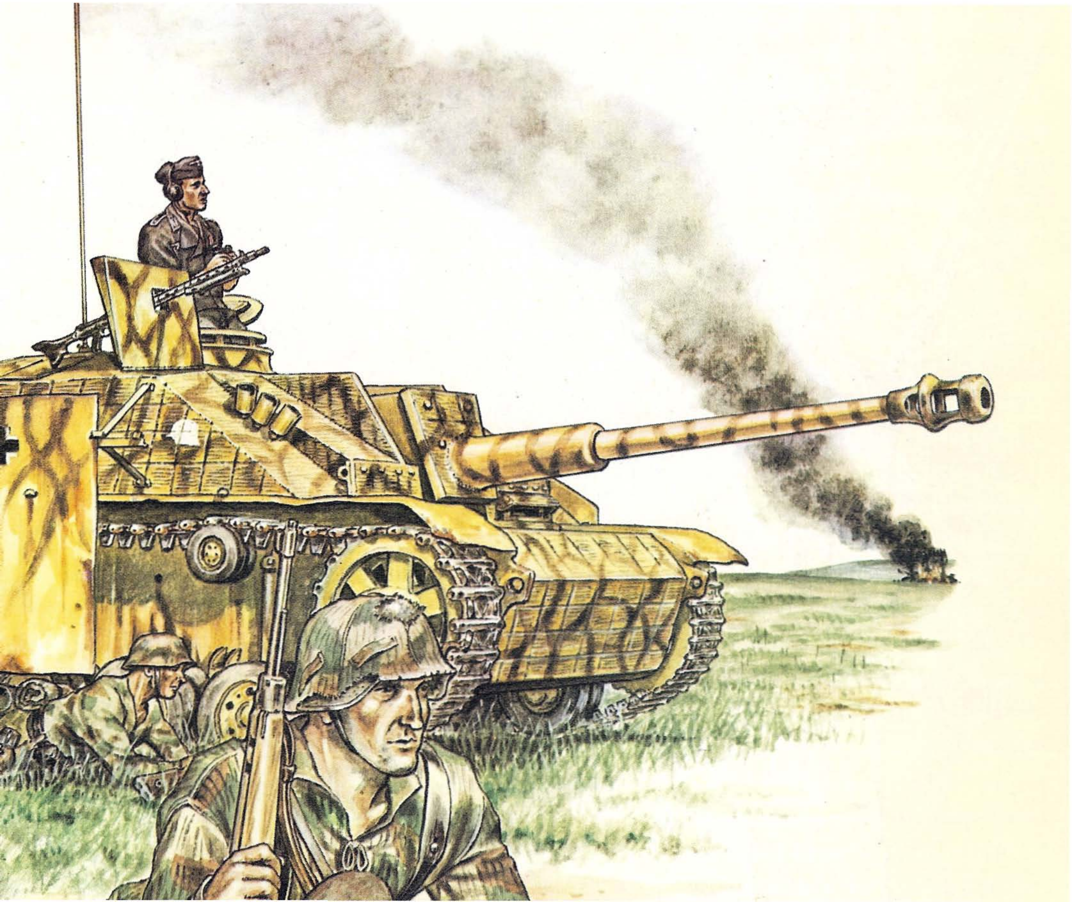
Panzer-Grenadier Division
'GROSSDEUTSCHLAND'



VANGUARD SERIES

EDITOR: MARTIN WINDROW

Panzer-Grenadier Division
'GROSSDEUTSCHLAND'

Text by BRUCE QUARRIE

Colour plates by MIKE CHAPPELL

squadron/signal publications

Published in 1977 by
Osprey Publishing Ltd
Member company of the George Philip Group
12–14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP
© Copyright 1977 Osprey Publishing Ltd

First published in the USA in 1978 by
Squadron/Signal Publications, Inc.
3461 E. Ten Mile Rd.
Warren, Michigan 48091

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electrical, mechanical or otherwise, without first seeking the written permission of the publisher.

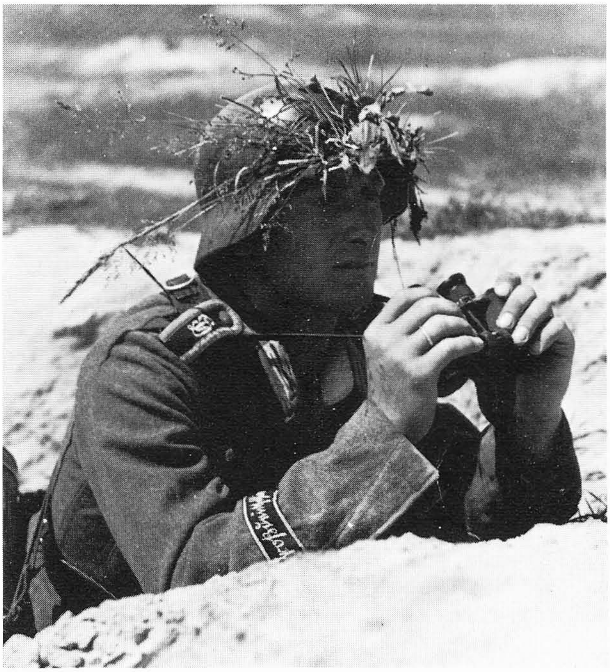
ISBN 0 85045 055 1

Filmset by BAS Printers Limited,
Over Wallop, Hampshire
Printed in Great Britain

The author gratefully acknowledges the invaluable assistance of Dr Haupt, Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, in selecting the photographs for inclusion in this volume. He would also like to thank Verity Galloway for translating the German records, without which this account would have been impossible, and Brian L. Davis, who patiently answered queries relating to uniform detail.

Bruce Quarrie is the editor of *Airfix Magazine* and the author of *Napoleonic Wargaming*, *Afrika Korps* and *World War 2 Wargaming* (Nos 4, 12 and 15 in the *Airfix Magazine Guide* series); *Tank Battles in Miniature 2: A wargamers' guide to the Russian Campaign 1941–1945*, and *Tank Battles in Miniature 3: A wargamers' guide to the North-West European Campaign 1944–1945*, all published by Patrick Stephens Ltd, Cambridge.

All photographs are by courtesy of Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.



1 Unterfeldwebel (sergeant) of the 'GD' Division. Note the divisional cuff title, which is the second variant instituted in October 1940, embroidered in copper-plate Gothic script; also the shoulder-strap motif which was worn by all ranks.

Introduction

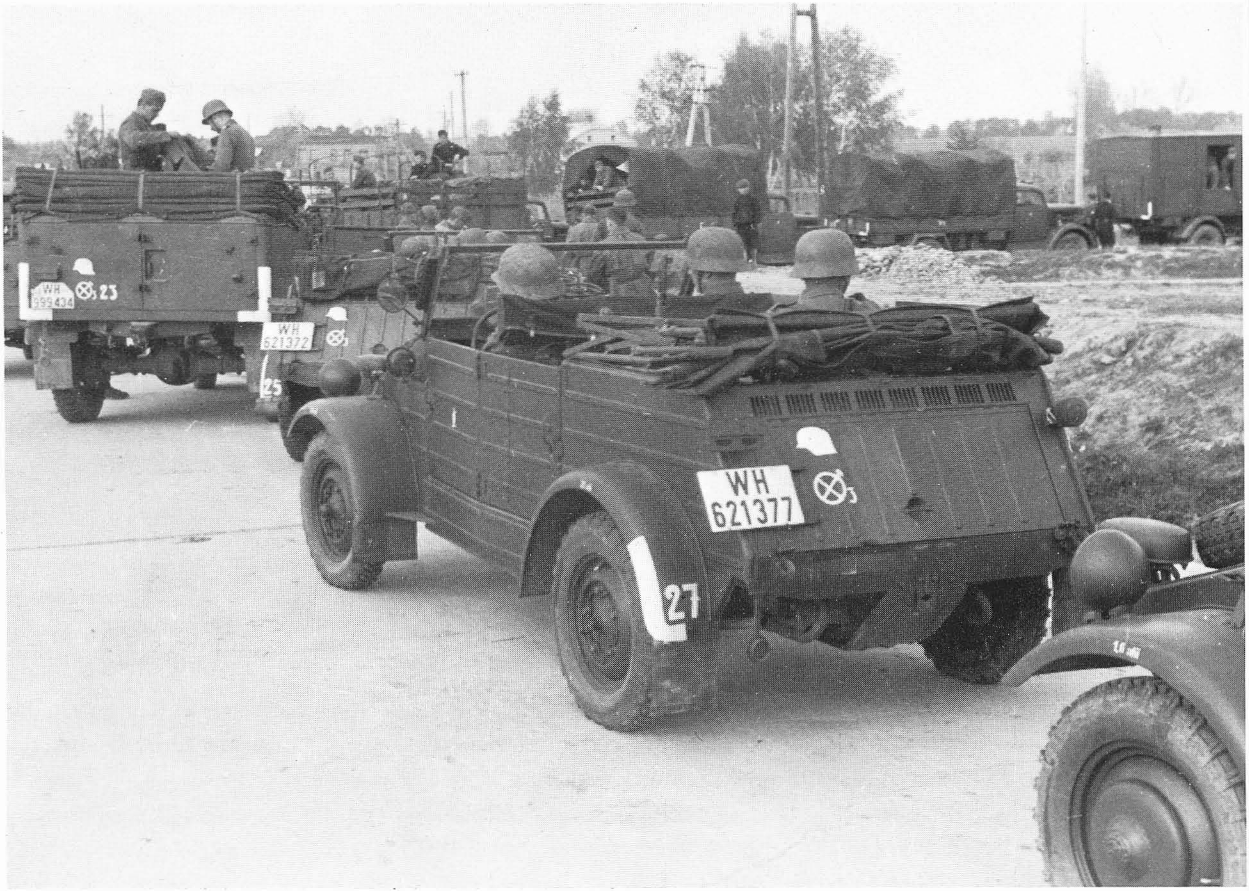
Practically every army throughout history has had its *corps d'élite*, from the Praetorian Guard through Napoleon's *grognards* to today's SAS and similar bodies of hand-picked men. In the German Wehrmacht of the Second World War there were several units which were given or which acquired a similar status, but of all these one stands head and shoulders above the others. This was Panzer-Grenadier Division 'Grossdeutschland', formed from the infantry regiment of the same name in 1942 and later increased to the size of a complete Korps with several divisions under command. With the exception of a couple of small detached units which fought in the west after D-Day, the division was occupied throughout the war on the Russian Front, where it was employed chiefly as a motorized 'fire brigade' wherever the fighting was hottest and most desperate.

As an elite unit, with the honour of providing the guard for Hitler's headquarters among its other duties, the 'Grossdeutschland' received priority in the allocation of new vehicles, equipment and clothing, while as a largely volunteer force, its officers and men developed a strong pride and *esprit de corps* which served them well on the offensive and helped preserve discipline in the last desperate days of the war when other units around them were cracking under the immense strain of the massive Soviet onslaught. Fully motorized, with a complement of tanks and other armoured fighting vehicles equivalent to that of a fully-fledged Panzer division, the 'Grossdeutschland' was a highly mobile formation ideally suited to the very fast-moving and fluid warfare in Russia.

The history of the 'Grossdeutschland' Division really dates back to the formation of the elite Berlin Guard Troop (Wachtruppe Berlin) in 1934, but can more realistically be dated from June 1939 when it was expanded to a full regiment of four battalions and first acquired the name 'Grossdeutschland'.

Taking no part in the Polish Campaign of that year, the regiment spent its time in training exercises at Grafenwöhr, after which it was put under the command of Guderian's XIX Army Corps for the forthcoming assault on France. During this campaign it thoroughly justified its status as an elite unit, taking part in the assault over the River Maas, the battle for Sedan and the breakthrough of the Maginot Line, and encountering British troops for the first time at Arras, during the drive on Dunkirk. At this time the 'GD' was a straightforward motorized infantry regiment, reinforced by an assault engineer battalion (the 43rd) and an assault gun battery (the 640th) with six StuG IIIs.

Transferred to the command of 10th Panzer Division, the regiment then participated in the



2 Kubelwagens and assorted medium and $1\frac{1}{2}$-ton trucks advance into Russia, summer 1941. The divisional *'Stahlhelm'* marking is clearly visible, as are the tactical markings denoting vehicles of the motorcycle recce company from the 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion. Note also the white formation-keeping markers on the outer corners of each vehicle to simplify travel by night.

Weygand Line breakthrough and the ensuing pursuit; it was also involved in the fighting for the Seine crossings in June 1940, and occupied Lyons on the 19th, before marching back to Paris for the victory celebrations.

A motor cycle company (the 17th) was attached to the regiment in July 1940, after which it was sent to Alsace to take part in training exercises for the planned German invasion of Britain (Operation *Sealion*) and Gibraltar (Operation *Felix*). During the following months the regiment was further reinforced by artillery, flak and pioneer detachments before being sent into Yugoslavia in April 1941. It was here that the 'Grossdeutschland' first really reached the public eye when Oberleutnant (Lieutenant) Fabich, commander of the 3rd Battalion, led a party of men to seize and reopen the Belgrade transmitter station, later to become famous as the German 'soldier's radio'.

Only the regiment's armoured and artillery elements took part in the initial assault on Russia on 21 June 1941, co-operating with 7th Panzer Division in their attack over the River Bug at Janow, but the remainder of the units soon followed, crossing the Soviet frontier north of Brest-Litovsk on 27/28 June and advancing on Minsk, which they reached on 6 July.

Again under command of the 10th Panzer Division, Infantry Regiment 'GD' continued to advance until the middle of July, over the River Beresina to the Dnepr, with occasional fierce hand-to-hand fighting against the stubborn but poorly led Soviet defenders. Transferred to a reserve position, the regiment was moved to the vicinity of Je[illegible]va, where it took part in the frantic defensive battles around the level crossing at Waskovo, for which the 1st Battalion's commander, Oberleutnant Hänert, received the Knight's Cross.

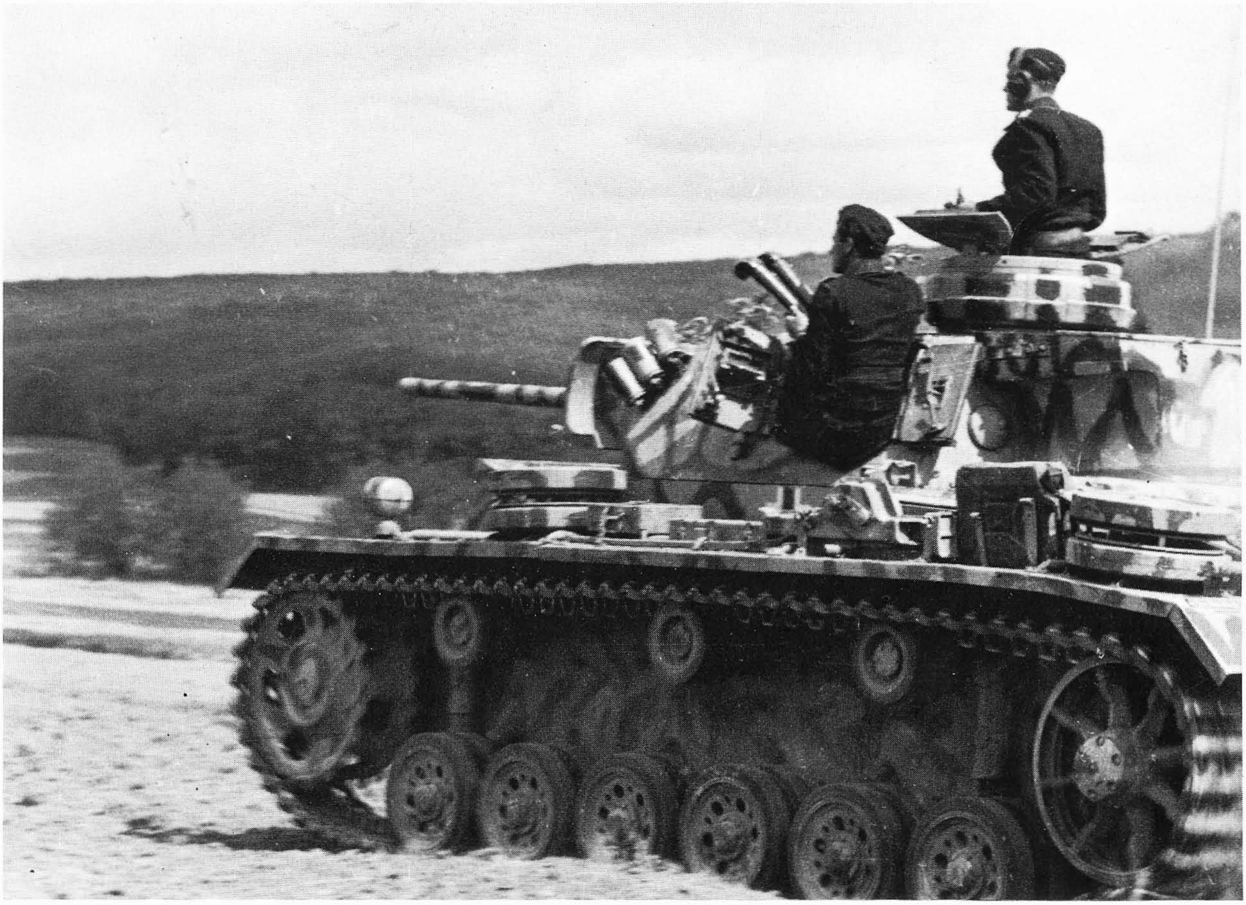
In September 1941 the regiment was again moved—something to which it was to become accustomed!—to Kiev, where it helped in the securing of the German bridgeheads over the River Desna, before being sent up to the north to take part in the desperate fighting for Orel and Tula during the Nazi advance on Moscow. Rain brought the inevitable clinging mud towards the end of October, which slowed progress, and at the beginning of December, when the cold really clamped down, the regiment was chiefly involved in defensive delaying actions along the Orel–Tula railway line.

During 1941 the regiment had a hard time, with a great deal of marching and fighting punctuated by some brilliant successes as well as some dismal defeats (almost the entire motor cycle company was wiped out at Kolodesnaja, near Tula, at the beginning of December). The tally up to 6 January 1942 was 900 men killed, 3,056 wounded and 114 missing; 1942 would also be hard, but it would see the reconstitution of the regiment as a fully-fledged division.

Until this point, Infantry Regiment 'Grossdeutschland' had been organized and manned just like any other line unit. In 1942, however, new regulations were introduced for enlistment in this elite formation, making it primarily a volunteer unit. Recruits had to be at least 1·70m tall (about 5ft 7in), and no one was admitted who wore spectacles or who had ever been convicted of a crime. Most importantly, all recruits had to be young, in good health, and of sound political conviction. In other words, although it was a Wehrmacht unit, its entry requirements were virtually the same as those for an SS formation.

Reorganization was inevitable after the losses of the previous year and the casualties during the fighting around Orel in the early part of 1942 (which resulted in the total disbandment of the 2nd Battalion and the distribution of its remaining men among the other battalions). Thus, between the beginning of April and the end of May, the regiment was re-formed as a motorized infantry division, and deployed back to Rjetschiza (on the Dnepr) to join its new battalions, which had been training in Germany. The composite unit, still under the command of Walter Hoernlein (promoted

3 Although the entire division should theoretically have been mounted in armoured half-tracks, only a small proportion actually was. These are SdKfz 250s.



5 A PzKpfw III Ausf M of the 'GD' Division in basic dark-yellow colouring with either green or red-brown camouflage applied over it. The crew member sitting in the turret side-hatch carries a pair of range-finding 'binoculars'.

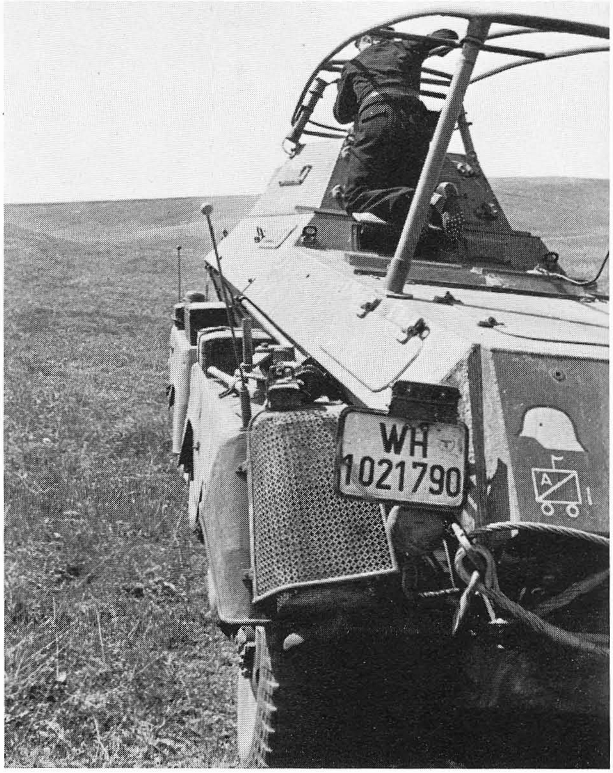
from Colonel to Major-General), was then moved south to the area of Fatesch for joint training, and finally thrown into the German summer offensive in the south.

Motorized Infantry Regiment 'GD'

The division's composition after reorganization was as follows: divisional HQ; Grenadier Regiment 'GD', with three battalions of motorized infantry transported in Opel 'Blitz' and similar trucks, plus three anti-tank companies using 5cm Pak 38s towed by light half-tracks; Fusilier Regiment 'GD', with three battalions of motorized infantry transported in Horch and similar medium cars, plus three anti-tank companies; a Sturmgeschütz Abteilung with three batteries each of six StuG IIIs; Panzer Truppe comprising one company of PzKpfw IVs and two companies of PzKpfw IIIs; a reconnaissance battalion equipped with one squadron of SdKfz 231 armoured cars, one squadron of SdKfz 250 half-tracks, two squadrons of light recce cars and motor cycles, and an anti-tank squadron with towed 5cm Pak 38s; a Flak Abteilung with three batteries of the famous 8·8cm dual-purpose anti-aircraft/anti-tank gun, one battery of 3·7cm guns mounted on half-tracks, and one battery of quad 20mm guns also mounted on half-tracks; an Artillerie Regiment with six batteries of 10·5 and 15cm guns and two batteries of 17cm K18s; and a Panzer Jäger Abteilung with two towed anti-tank companies and one company of Marder IIIs. In addition to these front-line troops there were the usual pioneer, pontoon, bridging,

4 Preparing an 8cm sGrW 34 mortar for action. The foliage tied to the front of the men's helmets was designed more to break up their silhouette than actually camouflage them.

supply, medical and engineering echelons.



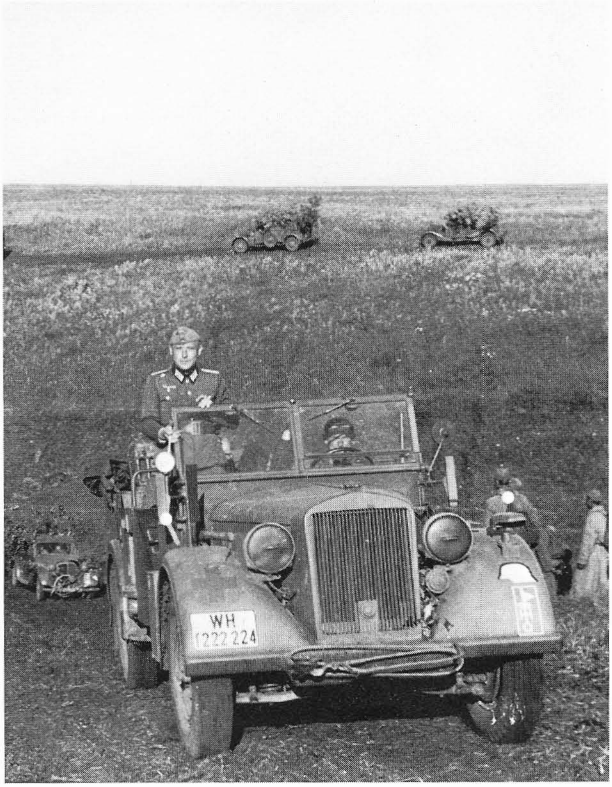
6 An SdKfz 231 command vehicle with frame radio aerial, clearly showing another variant of the *'Stahlhelm'* device and the tactical insignia of the HQ or signal company within the 1st Motorized Recce Battalion.

The 1942 summer offensive was Hitler's brainchild, designed to bring Russia to her knees, following his failure to capture Moscow the previous autumn. Its principal objective was the capture of the Caucasus oilfields, since the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe were always short of fuel; denial of these sources to the Soviet Union would also have hindered the Russian war effort. What it neglected to take into account was the sheer distance involved, and the problems of mechanical breakdown and maintenance on vehicles which had already been engaged almost continuously for nearly a year.

At the beginning the offensive went well. Fourth Panzer Army, of which the new Motorized Infantry Division 'GD' formed a part, rapidly completed an encirclement of Soviet troops east of Kursk which netted 100,000 prisoners, then pushed on over the River Tim to Voronezh, which fell on 6 July. Disengaging from action, the army then moved south-east down the west bank of the River Don as one arm of a gigantic pincer movement designed to link up with Sixth Army (moving east from Kharkov) and Army Group A in the south; the objectives were Stalingrad and the Caucasus. There was little fighting, and the division soon reached the River Donets at Michailovski, just north of its confluence with the Don; both rivers were crossed with relative ease and by the end of the month the division had also reached and crossed the River Manytsch.

The division escaped the Stalingrad debacle since it was now withdrawn from the line and re-formed as an OKH reserve at Schachty, on the north bank of the Donets, before entraining for the long journey north-west back to the central sector in front of Moscow. This turned out to be disastrous, but Stalingrad is so famous that the Soviet winter offensive in the centre is often forgotten. Here, the German forces were spread very thinly; their tanks were inferior, under these conditions, to the Russian T-34s and their supplies took so long to get through that it was a miracle

7 Horch medium car bearing the tactical device of the HQ company of a towed flak battalion.



they managed to contain the Soviet onslaught at all. Stationed in defensive positions in the Lutschessa Valley, east of Rschev, the 'Grossdeutschland' Division was cut off and practically encircled by the Soviet 185th Armoured Division. Few records exist of those desperate days of late November and early December; no accurate casualty returns have ever been published but it is estimated that in nine days of vicious fighting, the division only managed to extricate itself from the situation for the loss of 10,000–12,000 killed, wounded and captured. It was virtual annihilation. Fortunately for the Germans, the Russians were also preoccupied with the Stalingrad offensive, and by the middle of December their assault had slackened off, allowing the battered German divisions time to lick their wounds and re-form

Pulled out of the line again at the beginning of January, the remnants of the 'Grossdeutschland' Division were retired to Smolensk, and then transported south to the area west of Kharkov where their depleted ranks were brought back to strength and, indeed, added to. Surprisingly, the division's morale remained high despite its losses, and rose even higher as a result of its being renamed Panzer-Grenadier Division 'Grossdeutschland' shortly after. This new status meant that the division exchanged much of its wheeled transport for half-tracked armoured personnel carriers, particularly in the two infantry regiments, while its Panzer Regiment was augmented by four companies of Tiger I tanks.

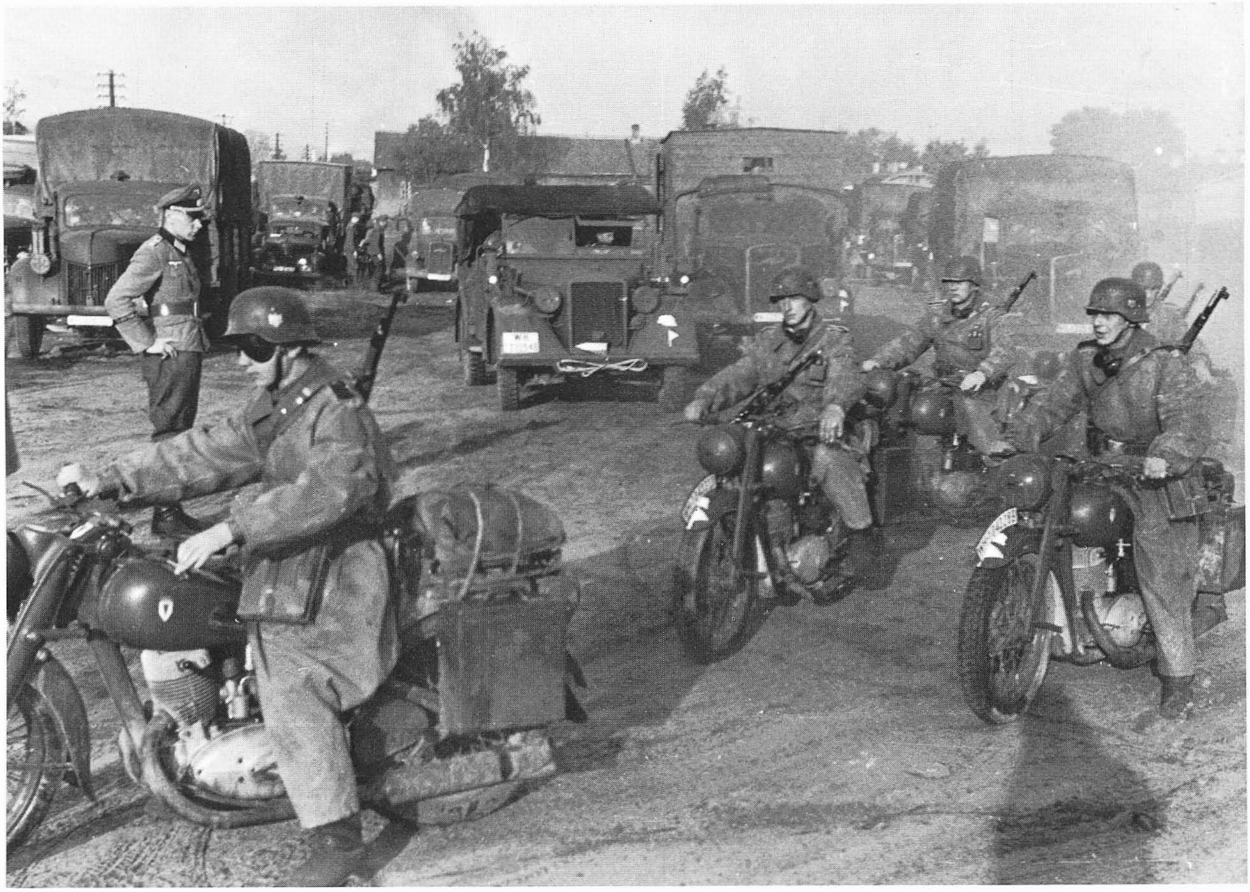
8 Russian prisoners-of-war help man-handle a motorcycle sidecar combination up a muddy slope.

Panzer-Grenadier Division 'GD'

For the first three months of 1943 the newly constituted division was chiefly involved in the seesaw battles around Belgorod and Kharkov, fighting for part of the time alongside SS Panzer Division 'Das Reich'. After the loss of Belgorod on 8 February and of Kharkov on the 15th, the division was withdrawn to re-form again south-west of Poltava before being thrown into the counterattack during the first half of March. During these battles, particularly for the villages of Borissovka and Tomarovka, the division's Panzer and Sturmgeschütz units were heavily involved, as a result of which both Hoernlein and the commander of the StuG Abteilung, Captain Frantz, received the Oak Leaves to their Knight's Crosses, while Oberst Count Strachwitz, commander of the Panzer Regiment 'GD', was awarded the Swords to the Oak Leaves of his Knight's Cross, making him one of the most highly decorated officers in the Wehrmacht at that time.

Following the success of these operations, the division was withdrawn again for a badly needed rest and refit which lasted from the end of March until 30 June. It was during this period that it was assigned most of its new equipment, including a second Tiger battalion, additional self-propelled artillery in the form of Wespes and Hummels, and more armoured half-tracks; and was formally rechristened on 23 June. On the 30th it began its move to the concentration area for Operation *Citadel*. The division's organization at this time was as follows:

> Divisional HQ; Panzer Regiment 'GD' with one battalion of four companies of PzKpfw IVs, one battalion of Tiger Is and a second battalion of Tiger Is being formed at Paderborn; Grenadier Regiment 'GD' with three battalions of grenadiers, of which the first was equipped with SdKfz 251s and the other two with assorted light and medium trucks, plus an SP anti-tank company equipped with Marder IIs and IIIs, a towed anti-tank company equipped with Pak 38s and 40s, and an SP Flak company; Fusilier Regiment



9 The HQ echelon prepares to move out; a Horch truck and Opel 'Blitz' lorries in the background. There is a command pennant below the 'GD' insignia on the motorcycle mudguards and a national eagle on the sides of the motorcyclists' helmets; their loose-fitting, rubberized, waterproof coats are gathered in round their legs.

'GD', equipped and organized in identical fashion; an armoured support battalion with two squadrons of SdKfz 250s, one of StuG IIIs (to be replaced by Hetzers the following year) and one of towed anti-tank guns; and a very strong artillery regiment now of four battalions, the first of which was self-propelled and the other three of which were towed. In the first battalion the HQ battery was equipped with PzKpfw IIIs, the second and third batteries with Wespes and the fourth with Hummels. In the second and fourth battalions there were two batteries each of 10·5cm guns and one of 17cm, while in the third battalion the two 10·5cm batteries were augmented by a towed anti-tank battery. The Sturmgeschütz Battalion remained the same as before.

In 1943 the crunch came for Germany. In January Flying Fortresses of the US Army Air Force staged the first daylight bombing raids on the country, while the RAF's night bombing offensive was being intensified. Stalingrad had been lost and Russian winter offensives had only been halted with difficulty. The Allied landings in Tunisia had sealed the fate of the Afrika Korps, and were soon to be followed up by the invasion of Sicily and Italy. No longer could the sweeping advances of 1942 be contemplated. Nevertheless, the enforced winter retreats had had the beneficial effect of shortening the German line in the east, freeing surplus manpower for a limited offensive. The objective chosen was the Kursk salient, a deep bulge in the German line centred around the town of the same name, which Hitler's planners decided, quite rightly, could serve as a dangerous focal point for a Soviet build-up and renewed offensive. It was thus decided to chop off this salient, thereby entrapping Soviet troops and matériel.

Unfortunately for the Germans, the Russians

10 Pak 40 7·5cm anti-tank gun in whitewash camouflage in action in Russia during January or February 1943. The gunners are wearing the two-piece snow suit with and without hoods, and with fur pile caps.

had not been as badly thrown off their stride by the loss of Kharkov as Hitler imagined, and they had already seen the value of the Kursk salient as a springboard for a renewed offensive. The result was an unenviable military situation in which both sides were pouring ever greater concentrations of troops, guns and tanks into a comparatively limited area. Who would strike first, and who would prove the strongest?

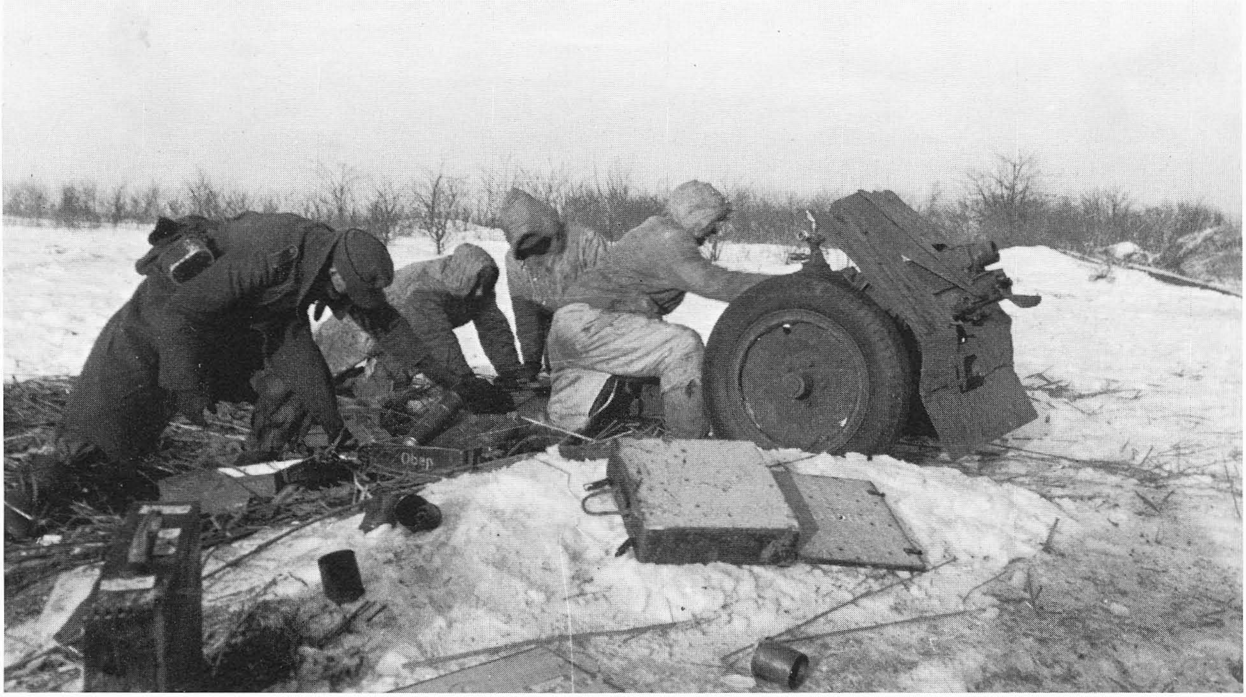
In the event it was the Russians who proved strongest. At the beginning of the German attack they had concentrated 1,337,000 men against the Germans' 900,000, 20,220 artillery pieces and anti-tank guns against the Germans' 10,000, 3,300 tanks and assault guns against the Germans' 2,700, and 2,650 aircraft against the Luftwaffe's 2,500.

Panzer-Grenadier Division 'Grossdeutschland' was part of the southern prong of the German offensive. Along with the 3rd, 6th, 7th, 11th and 19th Panzer Divisions, plus the SS divisions 'Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler', 'Das Reich' and 'Totenkopf', it formed part of the spearhead of Fourth Panzer Army, commanded by General Oberst Hermann Hoth. These nine Panzer Divisions formed the largest concentration of armoured might ever assembled by the Germans, with a front of 30 miles. Against them, however, were gathered the Russian 1st Tank Army and 6th Guards Army, with the 5th Guards and 5th Guards Tank Armies in reserve further to the north, ready to be committed when the precise direction and strength of the German thrust was known.

The Germans could no longer employ their hitherto-successful Blitzkrieg tactics against such a concentration, as the Russians had had ample time to prepare defences in depth, with concealed anti-tank gun positions, minefields and staggered reserves, creating formidable 'killing grounds' into which the German attacks could be channelled. Instead, a new form of offensive tactics was necessary; this took the shape of a huge wedge, with the Tigers, Elefants and Panthers in the lead, the lighter PzKfpw IIIs and IVs as a second wave, the Panzer-Grenadiers in their armoured half-tracks as a third, and the light self-propelled guns and motorized infantry in the rear.

When Hoth's attack began on 5 July 'Grossdeutschland' formed the spearhead of the assault, with no fewer than 300 tanks concentrated in its sector north of Belgorod. Directly facing them was the 6th Guards Army which had distinguished itself at Stalingrad and contained a hard core of reliable, battle-hardened troops. Their immediate

11 Infantry in action during the fierce fighting around Belgorod in January 1943. Both men wear two-piece snow suits; the man in front has his trousers reversed. Weapons are an MP40 sub-machine gun and 7·92mm Kar 98K carbine.



12 A 7·5cm IIG 18 light infantry howitzer in action near Kharkov, January/February 1943. The man on the left wears the standard Wehrmacht field-grey greatcoat and camouflage trousers, plus what appears to be a *Gebirgsjäger Bergmütze* (since the field-grey peaked *Einheitsfeldmütze* did not appear until June 1943).

objective was the town of Oboyan, which lay on the direct line of the proposed pincer movement designed to link up with the German troops advancing down from the north.

Initially the 'Grossdeutschland's' assault went well, despite mechanical breakdowns amongst many of its tanks and, by 7 July, the division had captured the village of Dubrova and forced the Russian forces back to the line of the River Pena. The following morning the Russians counter-attacked with 40 T-34s but were beaten off and forced to withdraw behind the river, leaving the road to Oboyan open. Moving up rapidly, the 'Grossdeutschland's' pioneers seized and repaired a bridge over the river, and the division's tanks rolled forward, reaching the heights overlooking Oboyan by late afternoon on the 9th.

Here, unfortunately, the division was halted, for Hoth's initial plan had merely called upon it to seize the river crossing, and in the meanwhile Kempf's battlegroup on 4th Panzer Army's right had run into difficulties. Unfortunately, there were signs of panic among the veteran troops of 6th Guards Army and, had this spread, there might well have been a rout, which would have altered the whole course of the battle of Kursk and, possibly, of the war. Kursk was the beginning of the end for the German cause. The order to halt allowed 5th Guards Armies time to move the 225 miles from their reserve positions to the southern front and bolster the flagging defences. The most decisive tank encounter of the whole battle took part on the morning of 12 July, when 700 heavy tanks and self-propelled guns of Hausser's SS Panzer Korps, operating immediately on the right flank of the 'Grossdeutschland', were met by around 850 Soviet T-34s and SPGs. By the evening, 300 tanks from each side had been destroyed in the frenetic 'dog-fighting', and although the SS held their ground, they were so weakened that any form of pursuit was impossible.

Meanwhile, news of the Allied landings in Sicily had reached the front, and on the 13th Kluge and Manstein, overall commanders respectively of the northern and southern flanks of the Kursk offensive, were summoned to the Wolf's Lair to see Hitler. Operation *Citadel* was abandoned, despite Manstein's protests that Hoth's local successes should be exploited, and the Germans fell back on the defensive. On 18 July the 'Grossdeutschland' was pulled out of the line to a regroupment area

13 PzKpfw IV Ausf G or H (foreground) with one of the few PzKpfw IV Ausf F2s which were sent to Russia in the early part of 1942. Both have had whitewash applied over their basic Panzer-grey finish.

around Tomarovka, which it had captured on 19 March, and on the 21st the division entrained to return to the central front at Karatschev, a village lying between Orel and Bryansk which it knew all too well from the previous winter's battles.

After some fierce fighting amongst the woods to the east of the town between 27 July and 8 August, the division was again disengaged and rushed back to the southern sector east of Achtyrka, which it managed to hold against renewed Russian pressure with just its Grenadier and Fusilier Regiments, while the tank and self-propelled gun units were deployed piecemeal as mobile fire brigades in the critical fighting west of Kharkov and north of Poltava during the rest of August and most of September. Although reinforced on 4 August by its second Tiger Battalion, by 29 September the 'Grossdeutschland' had only *one* tank at its disposal, so fierce had been the fighting.

Pushed back across the River Dnepr during the early half of October, the division still stubbornly resisted the growing Russian attacks and gave ground grudgingly, but flanked by German defeats in the north around Kiev and in the south towards the Crimea, had no option but to fall back or risk encirclement and annihilation. By the end of the year it was in Kirovgrad, practically due west of Dnepropetrovsk.

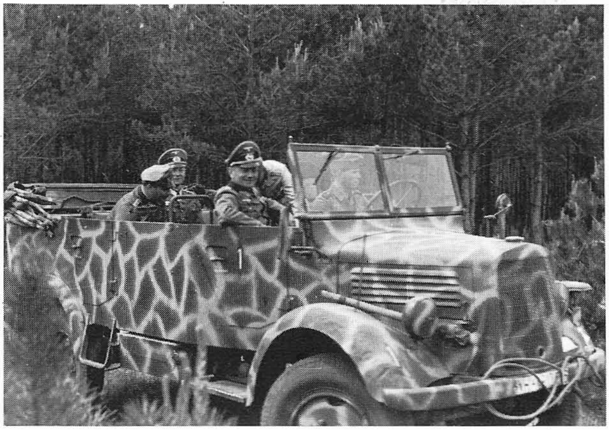
Things were going from bad to worse on all sectors of the front for the Germans. Weakened by the severe losses of 1943, and faced by an increasingly strong and skilful foe, they had no option but to enact a gradual withdrawal, trading ground for time—time during which, faith in Hitler's magical 'secret weapons' rapidly evaporated. New 'paper' divisions, frequently of little more than regimental strength, were created and thrown into the line, to be decimated almost as rapidly as they were formed. The brunt of the fighting was borne by the cadre of battle-hardened divisions such as the 'Grossdeutschland', which were rushed from one trouble spot to another in a frantic attempt to stem the 'Red tide'. In the last two months of 1943 the German army had been forced back an average of 150 miles on a 650-mile front, and had surrendered all the most valuable territory it had gained in the Soviet Union since 1941.

Once again, the 'Grossdeutschland' was placed in one of the most critical areas of the front, still as part of Fourth Panzer Army, this time defending the important iron and manganese mining areas near Krivoi Rog, which Hitler was determined to

hold at all costs. Unable to take the offensive because of lack of strength, the division—now under the command of General-Leutnant Hasso von Manteuffel, who took over from Hoernlein on 27 January 1944—was once again reduced to a series of desperate stop-gap defensive actions against the First and Third Ukrainian Fronts.*

On 16 January the division had received reinforcements in the form of a fresh Panzer Regiment, the 26th, equipped entirely with PzKpfw V Panther tanks. However, they didn't last long. Thrown into the fighting around Cherkassy, on the Dnepr, where the Ukrainian Second Front had effected a breakthrough and was threatening to encircle several German divisions, the regiment was practically decimated during the early part of February and had to be sent back to France to refit. It was still there at the time of the Allied landings on 6 June, and participated in some of the Normandy fighting until Hitler decided its presence was more urgently required in the east. In October it rejoined the division, which was fighting in East Prussia, but, for most of the year, the division's tank contingent consisted of just one regiment, comprising a battalion (five companies) of Panthers, a second (five companies) of PzKpfw IVs and a third (four companies) of Tiger Is (July establishment) under the command of Oberst (later General-Major) Langkeit.

14, 15, 16, 17 'Grossdeutschland' personalities. TOP LEFT: Major von Wietersheim in black Panzer crew jacket and field cap with pink *Waffenfarbe* and *Totenkopf* collar patches. Note the 'GD' shoulder insignia and copper-plate script version of the cuff band. TOP RIGHT: Major Otto Remer, one of the battalion commanders of the 'GD' grenadier regiment, in full regalia. He wears the standard officers' *Schirmmütze* with silver cord; decorations include the Iron Cross, Knight's Cross and General Assault Badge. BTM LEFT: Leutnant, later Hauptmann (captain) Gerhard Konopka, one of the division's most decorated officers. Here the four sleeve patches, each denoting the single-handed destruction of a Russian tank, can just be seen. He wears the 'old style' officers' field service cap with soft peak, no cords and flat woven insignia. BTM RIGHT: Hauptmann Mangold, commander of the 1st Sturmgeschütz Abteilung, wearing the 'old style' field cap (fitted, unusually, with cords) and the standard tunic issued to self-propelled gun crews, which was of the same cut as a Panzer tunic but in field grey instead of black cloth, and with artillery red instead of Panzer pink *Waffenfarbe*.



18 General Balck during a visit to the 'GD' Division in a yellow and green or red-brown camouflaged Mercedes staff car with divisional insignia and HQ pennant visible on the left mudguard.

During January and February Manteuffel led his combat-weary division through knee-deep mud, sleet storms and blizzards in a slow withdrawal west of Kirovgrad. By the end of the month the German army had been pushed back, in some places, behind the 1939 Polish border, though they managed to contain the major Soviet breakthroughs; for the first time since Christmas, they held a weak but continuous line midway between the rivers Dnepr and Bug.

At the beginning of March a new unit, Verstärktes (Reinforced) Grenadier Regiment (Motorized) 1029 'GD' was formed from the division's reserve units in Cottbus and moved to Zakopane (just south of Krakow, on the Czechoslovakian border). This regiment comprised an HQ company, two battalions of motorized infantry (each of only three companies, the third being a towed anti-tank unit in each case), plus an artillery battalion with one battery of 10·5cm guns, one of 17cm K18s and a half-tracked Flak battery with quad 20mm and single 3·7cm anti-aircraft guns on SdKfz 7 chassis.

On 4 March the Russians launched a renewed offensive by the First, Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts, reinforced by three Tank Armies, and advanced rapidly, pushing the Germans—and the 'Grossdeutschland' Division—back across the rivers Bug and Dnestr, off Russian soil and into Rumania. By the end of March the division was in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains near Kimpolung on the Hungarian-Rumanian border.

---

*Russian term for their equivalent of an Army Group.

It had been joined on the 31st by 1029 'GD' Regiment which had participated in the German occupation of Hungary earlier in the month.

Despite vigorous fighting in the vicinity of Jassy, by mid-April the division had been forced back behind the River Prut and established its headquarters in, and a defensive perimeter around, the little Rumanian town of Târgul Frumos; it succeeded in launching a successful local counterattack against superior odds on the 25th.

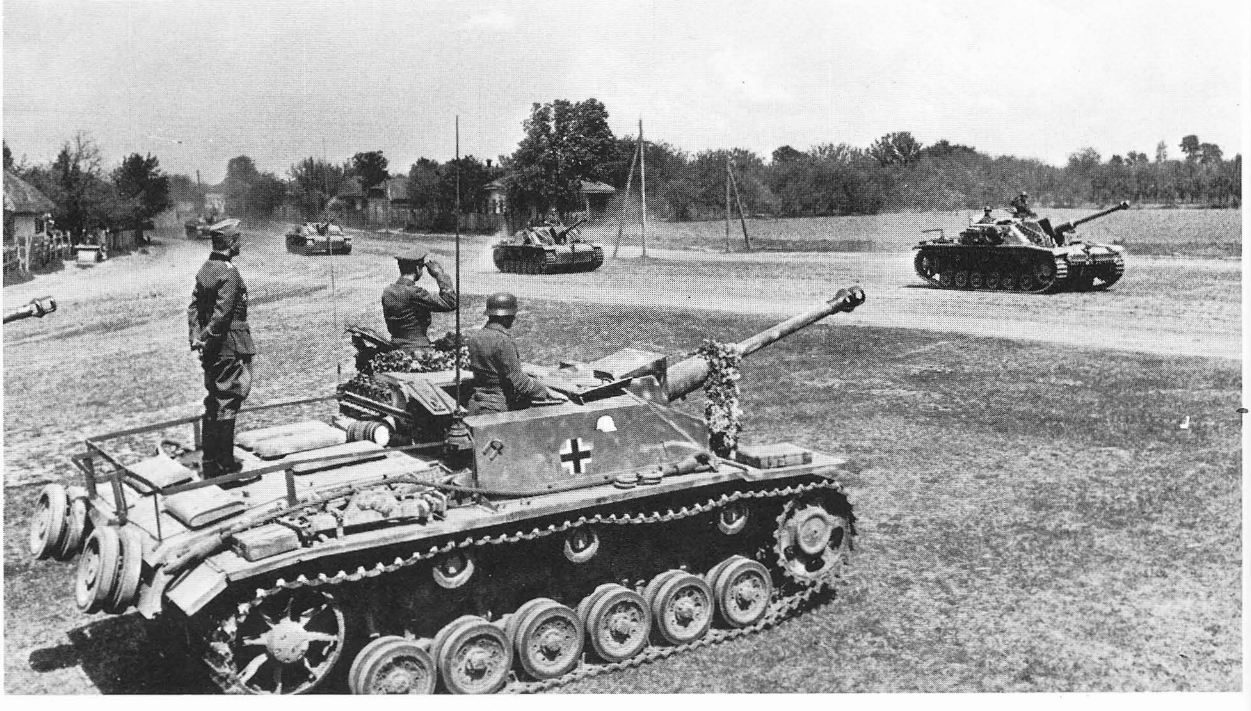
For a brief month it seemed to the luckless members of the 'Grossdeutschland' Division as though the Russian bear had finally exhausted itself, and they won a four-week respite from action. Surprisingly, Germany was almost as strong at this time as at any period during the war; by the end of April the German forces in the west, poised to repel an Allied invasion, were at full establishment. Casualties of men and equipment in the east had been almost completely made good, synthetic-oil production reached its peak, and output of new aircraft was 40 per cent up on the same time the previous year, despite Allied bombing raids on industrial areas.

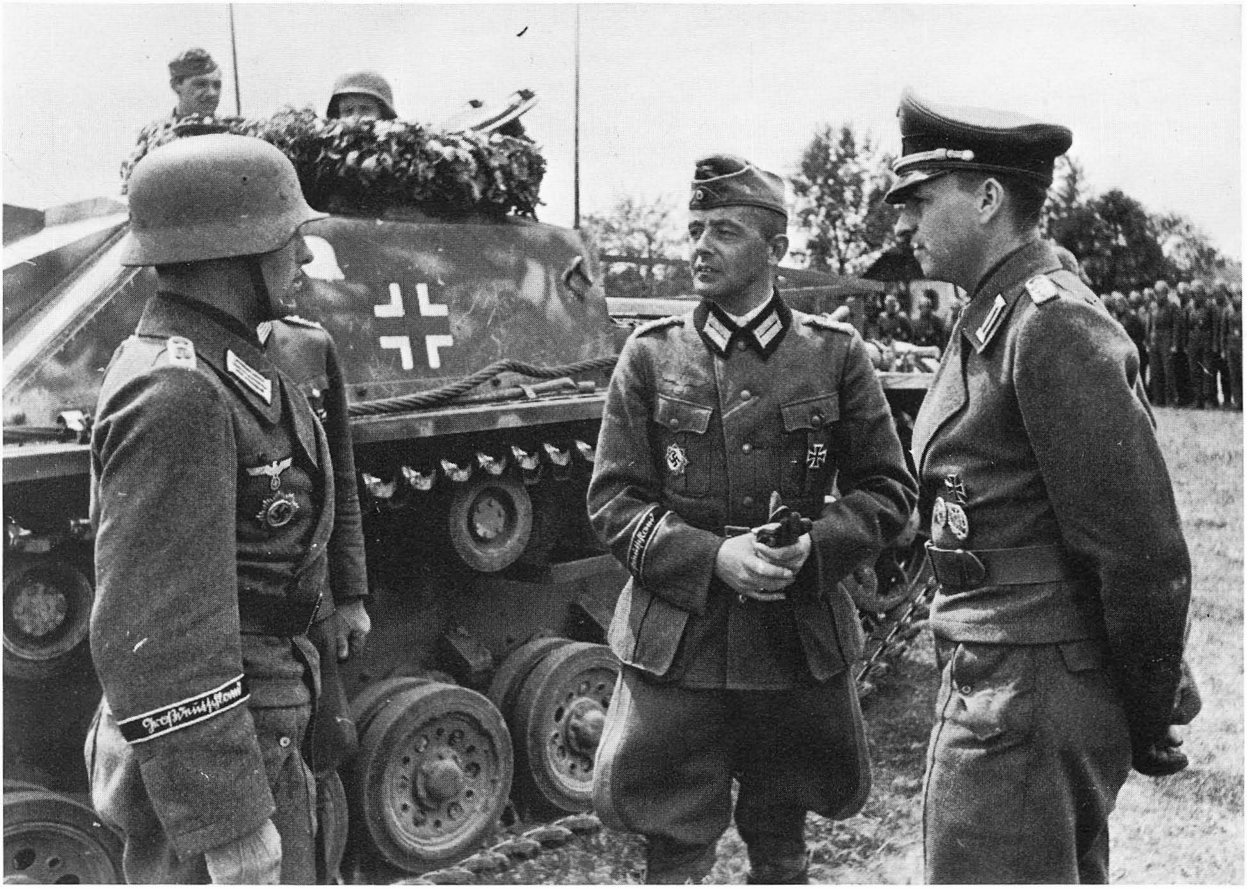
During May the Fusilier Regiment 'GD' was returned briefly to Germany to re-equip entirely with armoured half-tracks, and a shipment of similar vehicles reached the reconnaissance battalion. However, the two Panzer-Grenadier regiments were so reduced in numbers that each could only muster three instead of the previous four battalions—and each of these was of only four instead of the previous five companies.

At the beginning of June the division launched a second counter-attack which took it all the way back to Podul, north of Jassy, which it had abandoned at the end of March. As a result of his unit's success in this operation, Oberst Niemack, commander of the Fusilier Regiment, was awarded the Swords to the Oak Leaves on his Knight's Cross, but the regiment suffered such losses that its first battalion had to be temporarily disbanded and its survivors sent to swell the ranks of the other two battalions.

Following the Allied landings in Normandy on 6 June, the 'Grossdeutschland' Division was withdrawn from the line to a rest area some 100kms further south. The 1029 'GD' Regiment was disbanded and its men and vehicles incorporated among the division's other units to bring them back to strength; the 1st Battalion of the Fusilier Regiment was reconstituted and re-armed with

19 Men and vehicles of the 'GD' Sturmgeschütz Abteilung were spruced up in April 1943 when Hauptmann Frantz received the Oak Leaves to go with his Knight's Cross.





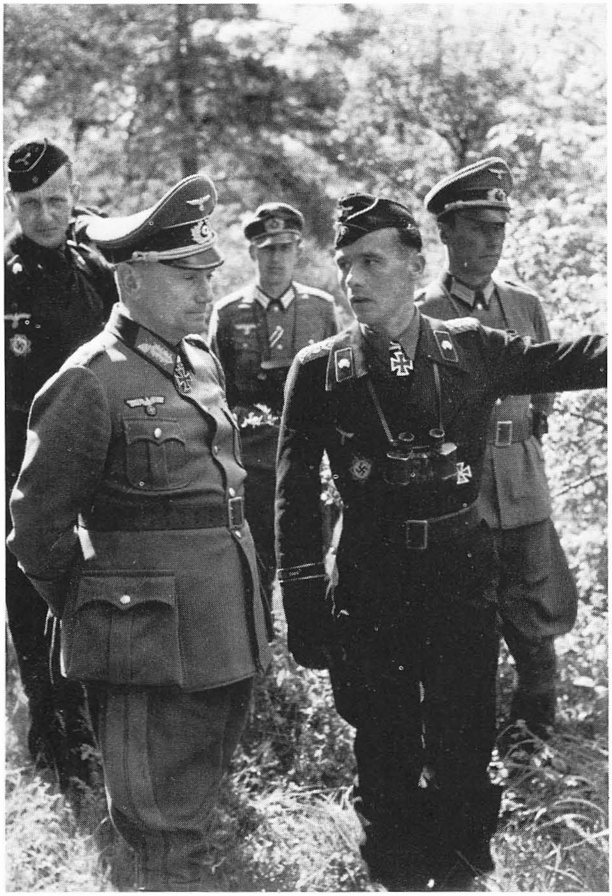
20 Hauptmann Frantz (right) with Oberst von Natsuner (centre) who as a member of the General Staff has red stripes down each leg of his riding breeches. The Leutnant (left) wears a 1934-pattern *Stahlhelm*. Note divisional insignia on side of the battalion's StuG III.

half-tracks; and the armoured engineer battalion was reinforced almost to regimental strength.

At the beginning of July a new unit, the Führer Grenadier Brigade, began forming in Cottbus from the divisional reserves. This, along with other elements, would soon form part of the new Panzer Korps 'Grossdeutschland'. In the meanwhile, Major Remer's 1st (Guards) Battalion, Grenadier Regiment 'GD', had been assigned second-line duty as the guard unit on the Fuhrer's headquarters, where it was still serving at the time of the bomb attempt on Hitler's life on 20 July.

In August the division embarked for new territory, Gumbinnen in East Prussia; once again it was the hottest spot on the front for the weary troops—the penalty for belonging to an elite formation! Army Group North had been encircled and trapped in the vicinity of Riga, and Army Group Centre—to which the 'GD' was now attached—was to open a corridor to them. After moving up to Schaulen, in Lithuania, on the 12th, the division took part in the second wave of the counter-offensive on the 18th and reached Doblen, on the border with Latvia, by the 25th, after heavy fighting against frenzied Russian counter-attacks.

On 1 September Manteuffel relinquished command of the division to the former commander of Grenadier Regiment 'GD', Oberst Lorenz. The remainder of the month was comparatively quiet, but at the beginning of October all hell was let loose. The Russians instigated a full-scale counter-offensive which cut off Army Group North's life-giving corridor and forced them back into Kurland. All the 'Grossdeutschland's' armoured vehicles were formed into a temporary group under Langkeit and thrown into the battle for the Memel bridgehead. Here they were joined, on 6 October, by the 1st (Panther) Panzer Regiment 'GD' (formerly Panzer Regiment 26 'GD', now de-



21 General Balck (left) with Major Pössel. The general wears the standard *Schirmmütze* with gold braid, officers' service tunic with box-pleated pockets, dark blue-green collar with general's red and gold insignia, red-backed shoulder straps, and national insignia in gold wire. Gilt buttons and brown leather belt. Major Pössel wears standard Panzer uniform: black *Feldmütze* with pink *Waffenfarbe* chevron and officers' silver piping; short double-breasted black tunic with shoulder straps in silver braid and Panzer pink; *Totenkopf* (death's head) collar patches; brown belt.

tached from the fighting in France), and on the 24th by the newly formed Führer Grenadier Brigade. This was the beginning of Panzer Korps 'Grossdeutschland'.

Panzer Korps 'GD'

The Korps officially came into existence on 1 November 1944, but it would be a mistake to think of it as a homogeneous whole for its composition altered practically day by day, while units technically under its command did not always fight together, or even in the same part of Europe.

Apart from the Führer Grenadier Brigade (FGB), the Korps also took under command the 'Brandenburg' Division, a Panzer-Grenadier unit based on a nucleus of troops from Admiral Canaris's famous regiment of the same name; the Führer Begleit Regiment, now strengthened to the status of a Brigade and shortly to be raised to divisional level; the new Panzer-Grenadier Division 'Kurmark'; and even the renowned Luftwaffe division 'Hermann Göring'. The organization of the Korps at the beginning of 1945 was as follows:

Panzer Korps 'Grossdeutschland' (General Dietrich von Saucken, former commander of 4th Panzer Division). Korps HQ and staff at Willenberg, East Prussia.

Panzer-Grenadier Division 'Grossdeutschland' (General-Major Lorenz). Organization as last noted with higher proportion of Hetzers in the SP anti-tank role, also in East Prussia.

Führer Grenadier Brigade (Colonel, later General-Major Remer). One armoured infantry battalion of four companies; one motorized infantry battalion of five companies; Infantry Battalion 829 (non-motorized)—four companies; a Panzer regiment comprising two companies of Panthers, one of Jagdpanthers, one of Marders and one of StuG IIIs; a Sturmgeschütz 'Brigade' of four batteries; an artillery regiment of three batteries; Flak Abteilung of two light SP batteries and one battery of towed 8·8cm guns; plus the usual supply echelons, etc. Based on the Western Front after taking part, along with the Führer Begleit Brigade, in the Ardennes offensive.

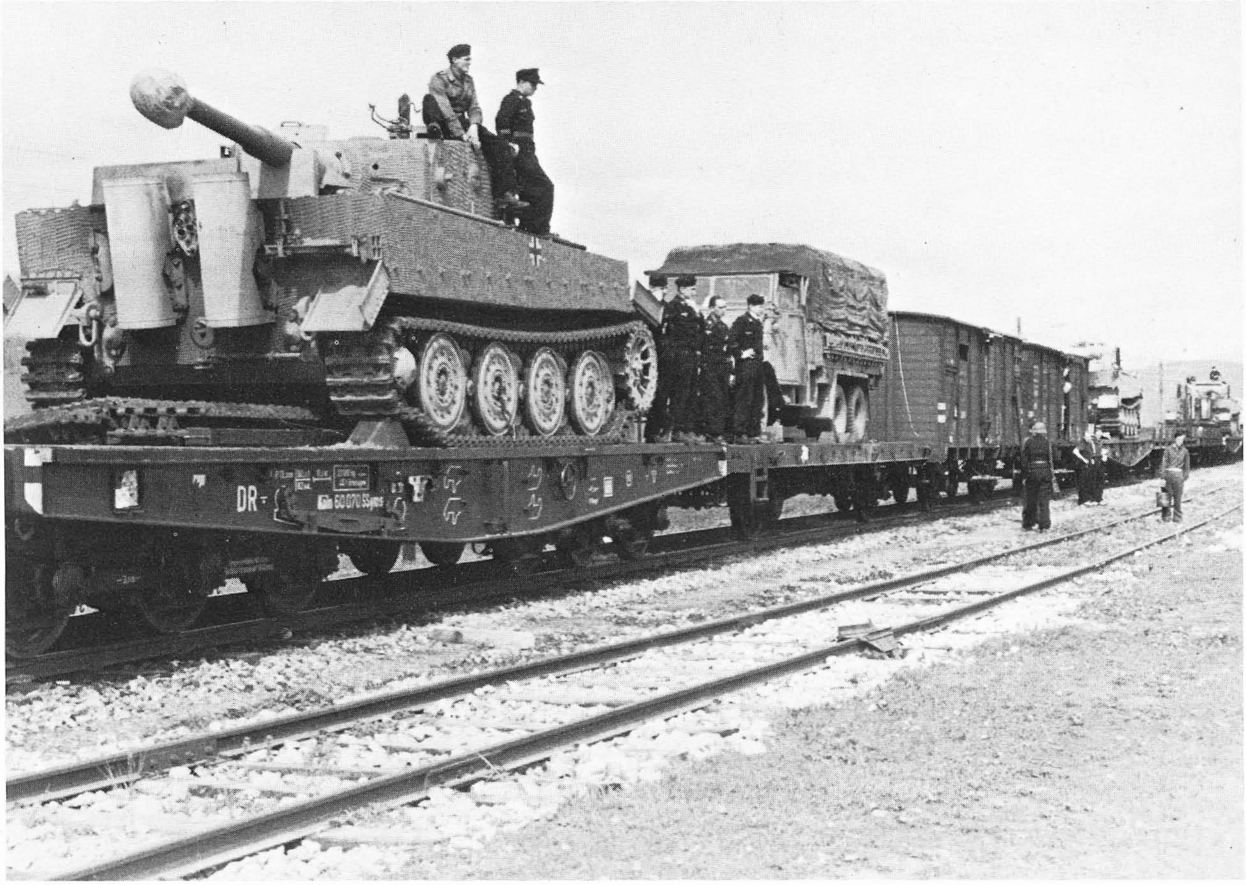
Führer Begleit Brigade (Colonel, later General-Major Mader). Strong HQ section including flak and armoured-car companies; Panzer Grenadier Regiment—1st Battalion of six companies, the third composed of SS troops and the sixth equipped with flame throwers; 2nd Panzer Grenadier Battalion of six companies including a machine-gun company (the 9th); Infantry Battalion 828 (motorized) of four companies; Panzer regiment of two battalions, the first of five companies of

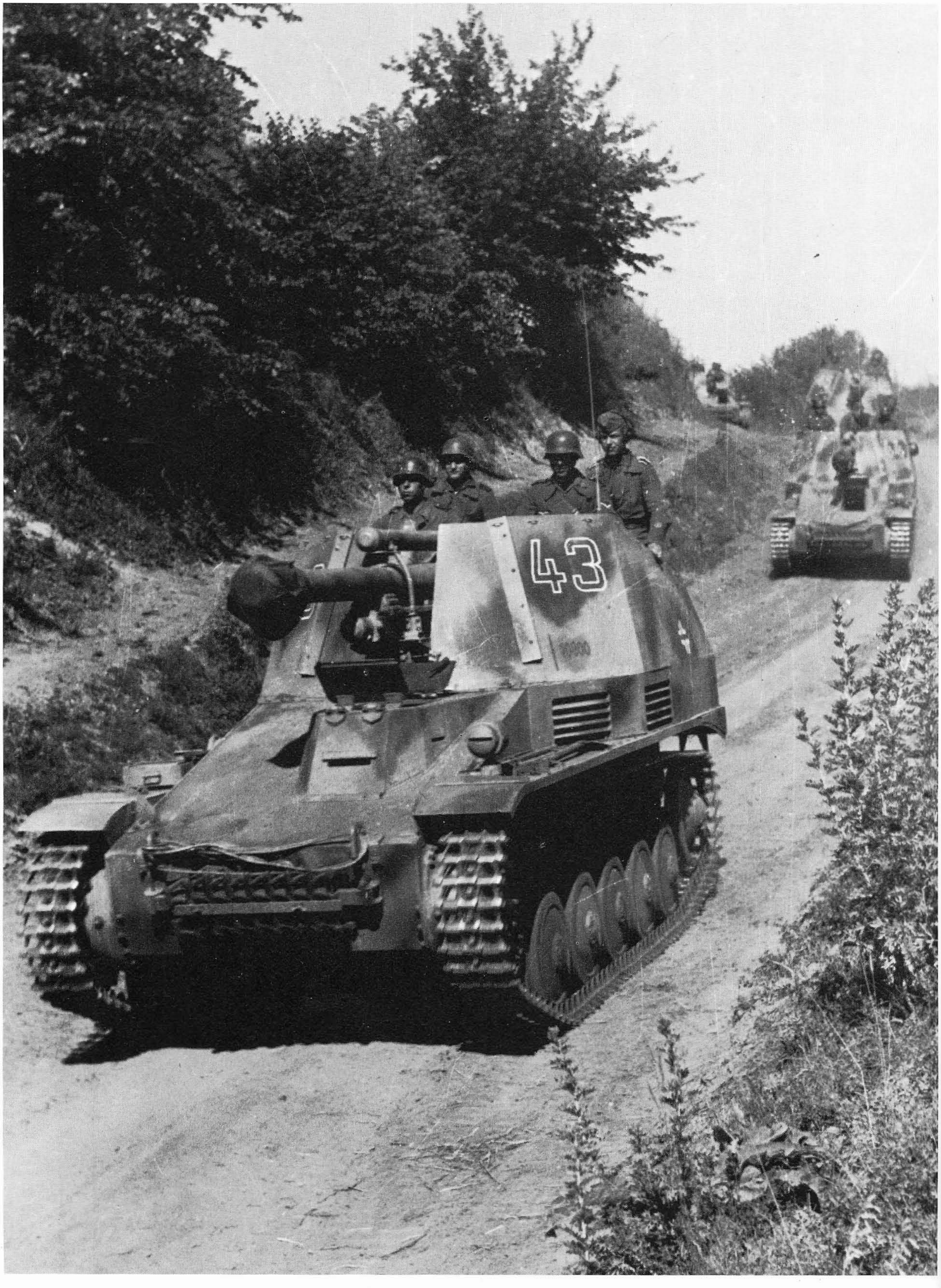
PzKpfw IVs and the second of four companies of StuG IIIs; an Artillerie Abteilung of three medium batteries; a very strong flak regiment with four batteries of light SP anti-aircraft guns and three batteries of towed 88s; plus supply echelons, etc.

Panzer Grenadier Division 'Brandenburg' (General-Major Schulte-Heuthaus). Two Jäger (light infantry) regiments, each of two battalions. The 1st Regiment comprised five companies equipped with armoured half-tracks in the 1st Battalion and seven companies equipped with trucks in the second; the 2nd Regiment was the same composition but lacked any armoured half-tracks. Attached was the *ad hoc* Panzer Gruppe Wietersheim with two companies of PzKpfw IVs and one of Panthers. This part of the division joined up with Panzer Grenadier Division 'Grossdeutschland' in East Prussia, its remaining elements being deployed to Belgrade. These comprised an artillery regiment (technically of four battalions although one existed on paper only), pioneer and flak battalions, a Panzer Jäger Abteilung with just two companies of StuG IIIs; and, operating detached from its parent unit, the Sturmgeschütz Brigade 'GD'.

Panzer Grenadier Division 'Kurmark' (General-Major Langkeit). Panzer Regiment 'Kurmark': 1st Battalion of four companies of Hetzers plus a towed anti-tank company, 2nd Battalion 'Brandenburg' of four companies of Panthers, plus a Panzer Grenadier regiment with two battalions, all motorized but unarmoured, the first battalion of five companies and the second of seven; each battalion

22 Tiger Is being shipped up to the front for the Kursk offensive, summer 1943. An unusual feature of the Tiger was that its tracks were too wide to fit on the standard German flatbed rail trucks, so special narrow tracks had to be laboriously fitted whenever one was transported by rail. The normal tracks can be seen beneath the tank in the left foreground of the picture.




43

23 Wespe self-propelled guns of the 1st Battalion, Panzer Artillerie Regiment 'GD', move up for 'Operation *Citadel*', summer 1943. Divisional and tactical insignia are partially obscured by the gun barrel. Camouflage red/brown over dark yellow.

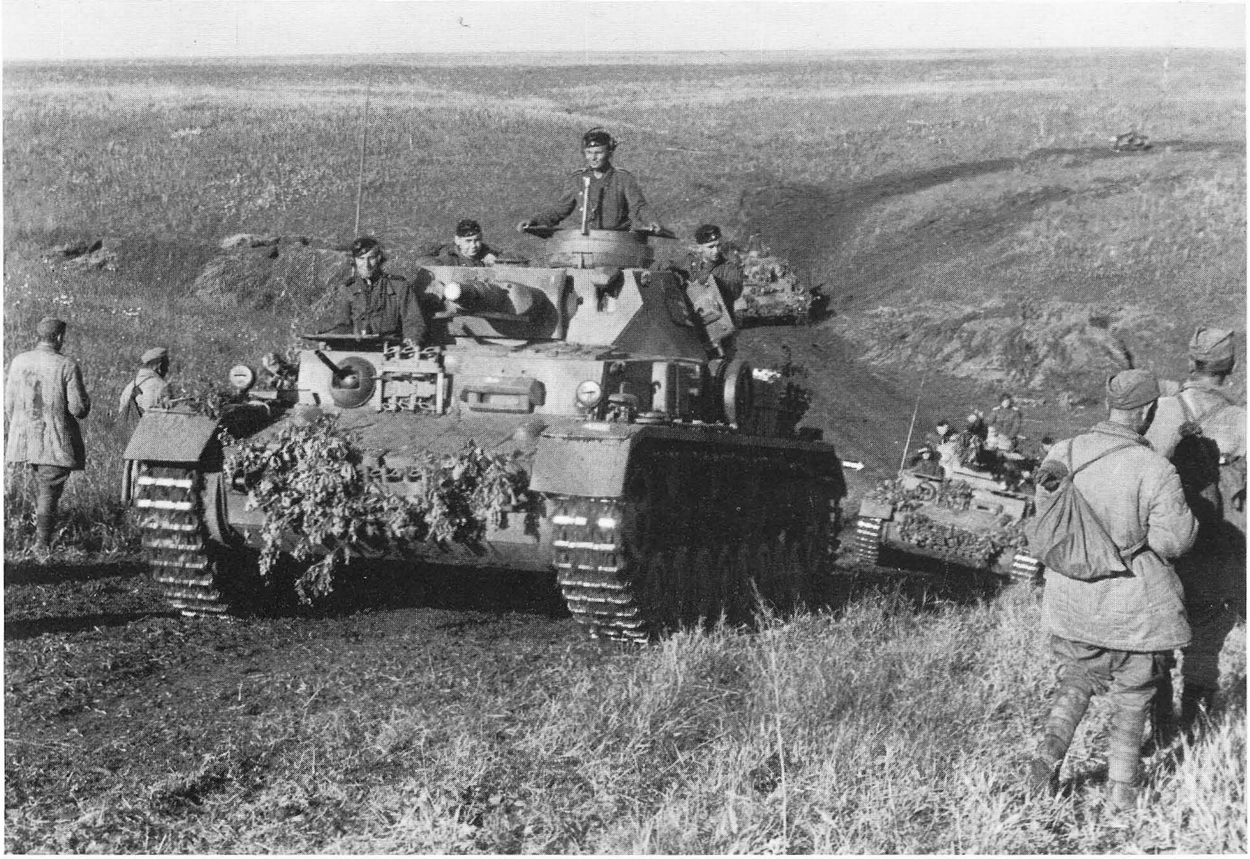
included mortar and machine-gun companies. Also attached were two heavy and one medium artillery batteries from Artillerie Regiment 'GD' and a light anti-tank Abteilung with one squadron of heavy armoured cars (Pumas) plus two squadrons of SdKfz 251s mounting PaK 40s. They were stationed near Frankfurt.

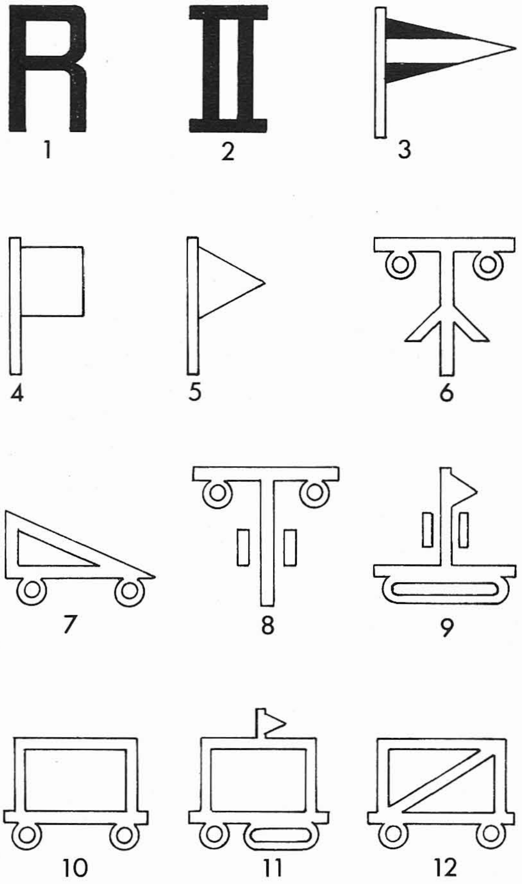
The 'Hermann Göring' Panzer Division really requires a book of its own. Promoted from a regiment to a brigade in the summer of 1942 and then to a division in 1943, it was virtually destroyed in Tunisia. Re-formed from elements which had remained behind in France, it was later sent to Sicily, withdrawn to the Italian mainland, and continuously engaged in the bitter fighting there until the beginning of 1945 when it came under command of the new Panzer Korps 'Grossdeutschland' at Litzmannstradt on 14 January. Commanded by General-Leutnant Paul Conrath, it comprised two Panzer Grenadier regiments and one Jäger regiment plus a Panzer regiment, artillery, flak and reconnaissance regiments.

Of these units, only the parent 'Grossdeutschland' and the Führer Begleit Brigade troops wore the 'GD' armband. The 'Brandenburg' and 'Herman Göring' Divisions each had their own name armbands. However, all vehicles in the Korps with the exception of those belonging to the 'Hermann Göring' Division were entitled to carry the white *Stahlhelm* device, although not all of them did.

Returning to the war: after heavy positional fighting around the Memel bridgehead during October and most of November 1944, the 'Grossdeutschland' Division was evacuated by sea

24 PzKpfw IV Ausf F1, the last version of this vehicle to mount the short-barrelled 7·5cm gun, advancing past Russian prisoners, summer 1943. The 'GD' badge is on the front of the left-hand track guard.





German tanks carried, officially, a three-digit number on turret sides and rear, and sometimes on the rear hull, in black, white, red, or a combination of any two shades—e.g. red outlined white. These identified company, troop and vehicle, e.g. '321' indicates 3rd Company, 2nd Troop, first tank. Regimental HQ tanks carried the letter 'R' (see *1*) followed by '01' for commander, '02' for adjutant, '03' for signals officer and '04' for regimental staff officer. Battalion HQ tanks used a similar system, with Roman 'I' and 'II' replacing the 'R' for 1st and 2nd Battalion staffs (see *2*). Command pennants were often painted above tactical signs on divisional, regimental and battalion HQ vehicles other than tanks—respectively (*3*), (*4*), and (*5*) above. Tactical arm-of-service signs were usually painted in yellow, but sometimes in white, on the front and rear mudguards or hulls of most types of vehicles. Some examples are (*6*) motorized anti-tank unit, towed (*7*) motorized anti-tank unit, self-propelled (*8*) towed artillery, motorized (*9*) battalion HQ vehicle, tracked SP artillery unit (*10*) motorized infantry unit (*11*) battalion HQ vehicle, motorized infantry unit with half-tracks, and (*12*) motorized recce unit.

on 26 November and shipped via Königsberg to the vicinity of Rastenburg; the Führer Begleit Brigade entrained for the concentration area of Fifth Panzer Army, in the Eifel, preparatory to the Ardennes offensive; and the Führer Grenadier Brigade, after a brief rest period in Cottbus, joined it on 22 December. The course of the 'Battle of the Bulge' did not concern the 'Grossdeutschland' Division itself and its history is sufficiently well known not to need repeating here; suffice it to say that, after taking part in the original offensive and reaching St Vith on 21 December, the Führer Begleit Brigade, together with the Grenadier Brigade, was thrown back on the defensive on the 25th.

The Ardennes offensive was Hitler's last attempt to win the war in Europe. His megalomania had by this time reached such proportions that he was creating 'paper' divisions out of thin air—battalions were graced with the names of brigades and regiments with the names of divisions—all totally meaningless because Germany no longer had the manpower, vehicles, weapons or, save in a few elite formations such as the 'Grossdeutschland' and the SS divisions, the willpower to fight. Recruitment was at an all-time low, with 14- and 15-year-old boys and 60-year-old grandfathers being rushed into uniform to fill the crumbling ranks of the Wehrmacht. Nevertheless, in a few formations—such as the surviving nucleus of parent units within the 'Grossdeutschland' Division—there still existed a hard core of weary but experienced troops who were to cause the Allies much grief before the final collapse of the Third Reich.

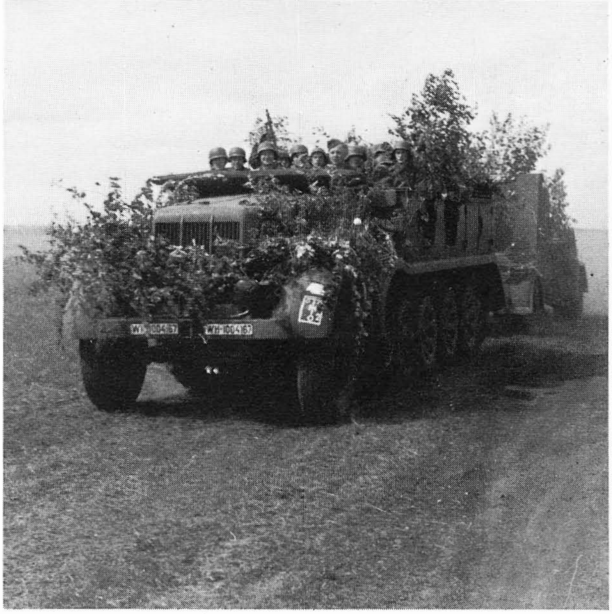
After their regroupment, the various units of the 'Grossdeutschland' Korps were assembled as an OKH reserve in the area of Willenberg, whence they were pushed back towards Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) by the Russian Second and Third Fronts during January 1945. After fierce defensive fighting during February and an abortive counter-attack in early March, the division was forced back into the constricted area of the Balga Peninsular from where, at the beginning of April, its last remnants—a mere 4,000 men—were shipped by ferry back to Pittau and thence, after a brief spell in the line, right back to Schleswig-Holstein, where they heard the news of Hitler's suicide and the end of the war in Europe.

The 'Grossdeutschland' Guards Battalion, elevated to a regiment in February 1945, went down fighting in Berlin.

The 'Brandenburg' Division, after fighting for four months in delaying actions which took it all the way from Lodz back to Bautzen, was finally disbanded and taken prisoner near Deutschbrod at the beginning of May.

The Führer Grenadier Division first surrendered to the Americans at the same time, but the majority of its members were handed over to the Russians on 13 May. Few ever returned to their homes.

Langkeit's 'Kurmark' Division was luckier; severely reduced, they were taken prisoner by the Americans and were not exchanged. The remnants of the Führer Begleit Brigade surrendered with them.



25 One of the most familiar sights of the war, an SdKfz 7 half-track towing an 8·8cm dual-purpose AA/AT gun. The divisional insignia and tactical sign for a towed artillery unit are on the left mudguard.

Uniforms and Insignia

With the exception of their special cuff bands and shoulder-patch insignia, the officers and men of the 'Grossdeutschland' Division were dressed and equipped exactly the same as other Wehrmacht units, although at one time a special uniform had been designed for them.

In March 1939 a unique tunic was introduced, to be worn with the standard Model 1935 *Stahlhelm*, grey trousers and black marching boots or 'jack-boots'. This was of field grey material with elongated collar patches, no pockets, 'French' cuffs, white metal buttons and white *Waffenfarbe* (arm of service) piping around the collar, down the front of the tunic, around the top of the cuffs, and edging the tails. A special greatcoat with an extra large collar and white piping was also designed. Photos of troops wearing these garments are very rare and they do not appear to have been issued in great numbers. The basic dress for the division was thus as follows:

Headgear

The *Stahlhelm* (steel helmet) was worn by all ranks in the field, and came in three patterns: the 1916 model, which had replaced the *Pickelhaube* during World War I, was only really worn by second-line units and would not have been issued to the elite 'GD' personnel; the 1935 model, which was similar in shape but smaller and lighter; and the 1943 model which was basically the same as the 1935 pattern, manufactured by a simpler and cheaper process, without a crimped-in rim. Until 1940 all helmets were painted inside and out with field grey paint, with the national red/white/black tricolour shield on the right side and the Wehrmacht eagle and swastika emblem in black and white on the left. After that year the insignia were gradually dropped, and the 1943 *Stahlhelm* was issued without them. All versions of the helmet had leather lining and a black leather chinstrap. A variety of coverings were made available or improvised for the helmet, ranging from rubber bands and string, or chicken wire nets into which foliage could be tucked, to proper camouflage covers in two-tone green and brown.

Officers could wear one of three basic styles of cap. The Uniform Cap (*Schirmmütze*) was worn mainly for parades, etc, and was a stylish piece of headgear with a deeply curved, stiffened crown in field grey with appropriate *Waffenfarbe* around the edge; a piped cap band of dark blue-green; and a shiny leather peak with a rim. On the front of the cap were the national eagle and swastika in silver, and the Reich cockade surrounded by a silver oakleaf wreath. Silver cords (gold for generals) ran across the top of the peak.

In the field, officers would normally wear a similar cap known as the 'Old Style Field Service Cap', which differed from the *Schirmmütze* in having a smaller, soft crown, no cords and no rim to the leather peak. An officers' version of the other ranks' field service cap (*Feldmütze*) was popular. This was similar in design to an old stable or forage cap, and was manufactured in grey cloth with ear flaps which could be (but rarely were) turned down to cover the wearer's ears. On the front of the cap the national eagle was worn above a chevron in the appropriate *Waffenfarbe* surmounting the Reich cockade. Officers' field caps also had silver piping (gold for generals). These caps were worn by all troops, regardless of rank. Panzer crews were issued with one of identical cut, in black material.

A second type of field service cap was issued for use by all ranks from June 1943 onward. This cap, known as the *Einheitsfeldmütze*, was based on the tropical field cap worn by the Afrika Korps, and was essentially the same as the *Feldmütze*, complete with ear flaps, except that it had a stiffened cloth peak. Manufactured in field grey cloth (black for Panzer crews), it became the most popular form of headgear in the German army.

Fur caps in various styles were worn by all ranks who could get hold of them, especially during the Russian winter, while there were also several types of helmet covering and hoods in white material for snow camouflage.

The basic *Waffenfarbe* colours were as follows: bright red for generals and artillery personnel (including self-propelled gun crews); white for infantry; bright yellow for cavalry and recce units (light brown for Panzer recce personnel); pink for armoured troops; grass green for Panzer Grenadiers (except that the 'Grossdeutschland' troops retained infantry white); cornflower blue for medical personnel; black for engineers; pale yellow for signals troops; dark green for administrative personnel; light blue for mechanized supply troops; wine red for *Nebelwerfer* units; orange for recruiting officers and carmine for veterinary troops.

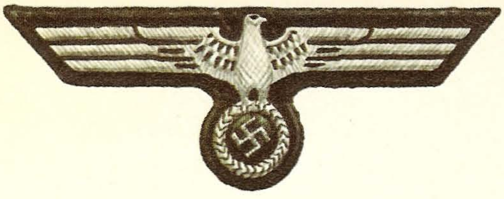
The padded black floppy beret designed specially for Panzer troops dropped out of use after the Polish campaign, although it was sometimes seen in France during 1940.

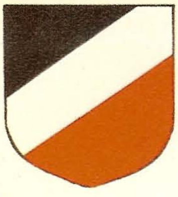
Tunics, trousers, smocks and coats

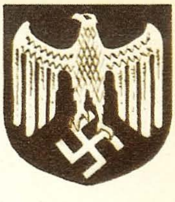
The basic tunic worn by all ranks of the Wehrmacht, though in superior quality material for officers, was the 1936 Service Tunic (*Dienstanzug*). It was field grey in colour, with five buttons of the same shade down the front. It had four large pleated pockets, two on the chest and two on the hips, with three-pointed, button-down, flaps. There were belt hooks around the waist to hold the black leather belt (brown for officers). The belt was fastened at the front by either a plain steel two-pronged buckle (officers) or a rectangular buckle plate with the eagle and swastika device in a small circle in the centre, surrounded by an outer circle carrying the legend 'GOTT MIT UNS' (God with us).

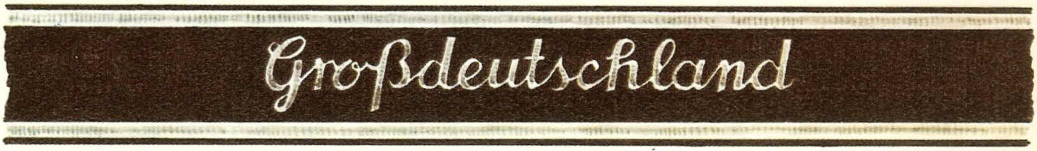
The collar was faced in dark blue-green material, providing a backing for the collar patches, which were normally embroidered in silver-grey with two small bars of the wearer's appropriate *Waffenfarbe*. In addition, the national eagle in silver-grey on a backing of the same dark blue-green material was worn on the right breast, just above the pocket.

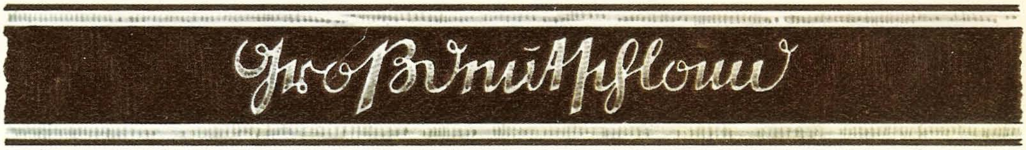
Shoulder straps were the most important means of identification in the German army. These were buttoned down over any personal equipment straps, and were usually removable. Each was in dark blue-green material, edged with the appropriate *Waffenfarbe*, while the centre carried pips or braid denoting the wearer's rank. In the 'Grossdeutschland' Division the shoulder straps were further dignified by a woven, or metal alloy, device of the Gothic letters 'G' and 'D' superimposed upon each other. Many other units had identifying devices of this nature, but most infantry regiments wore (when not in a war zone) a plain Arabic numeral. In the field it was found that shoulder straps, particularly those of officers, made rather obvious targets, and slip-over field grey

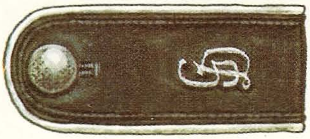

A1

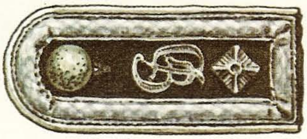

A2

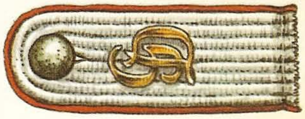

A3

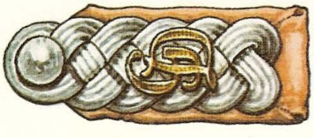

Großdeutschland
A4

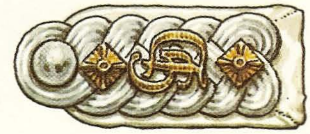

Großdeutschland
A5

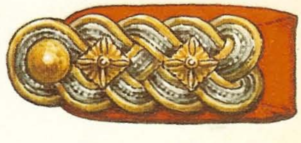

A6

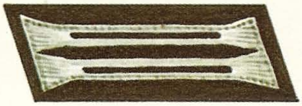

A7

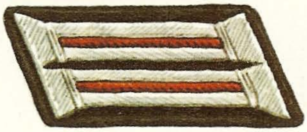

A8

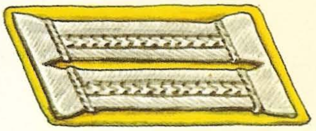

A9

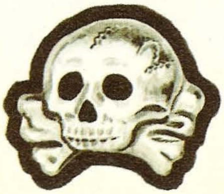

A10

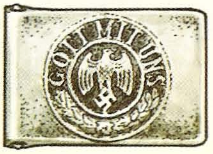

A11

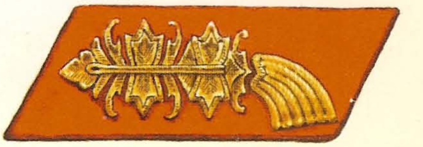

A12


A13

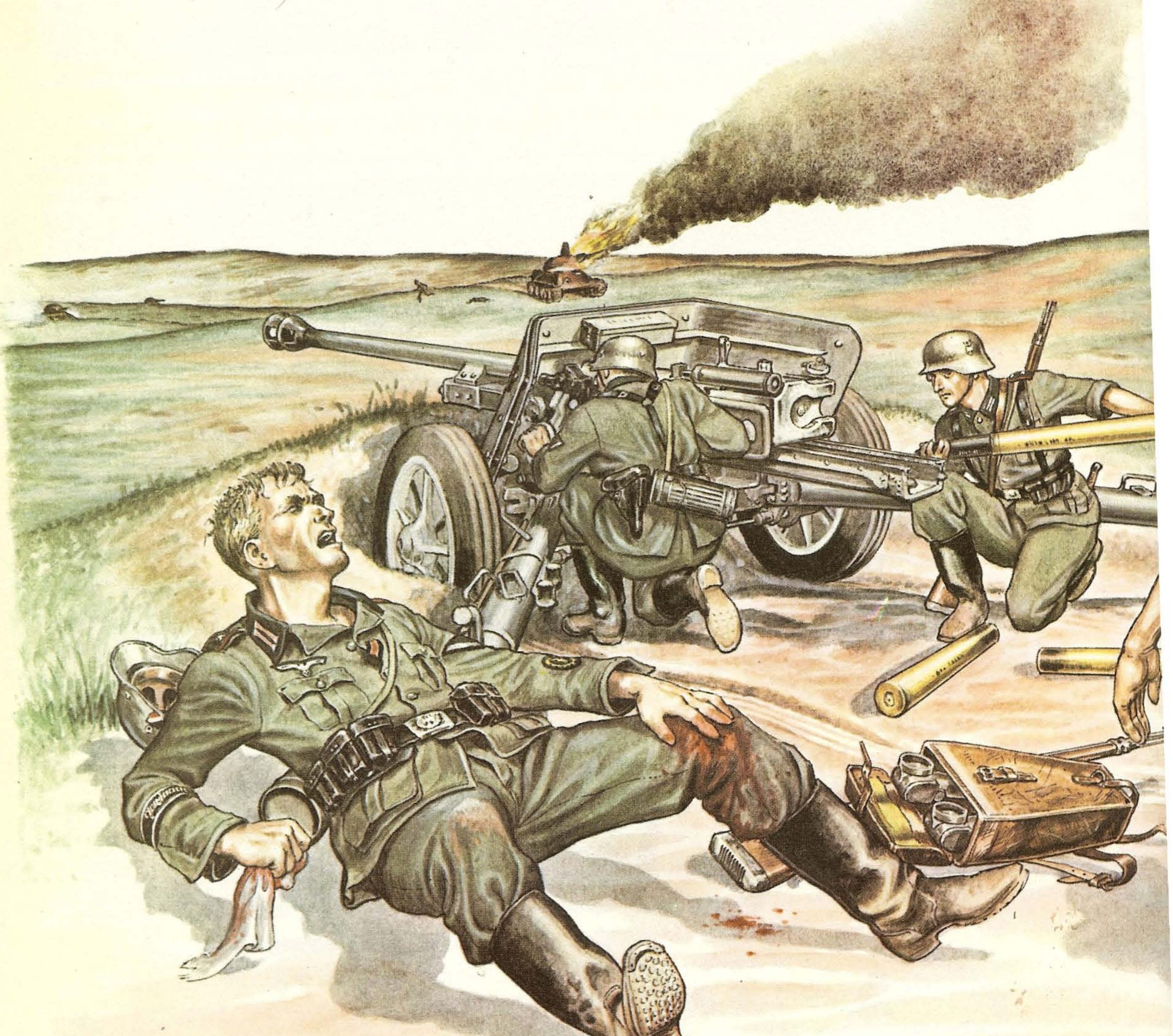

A14


A15

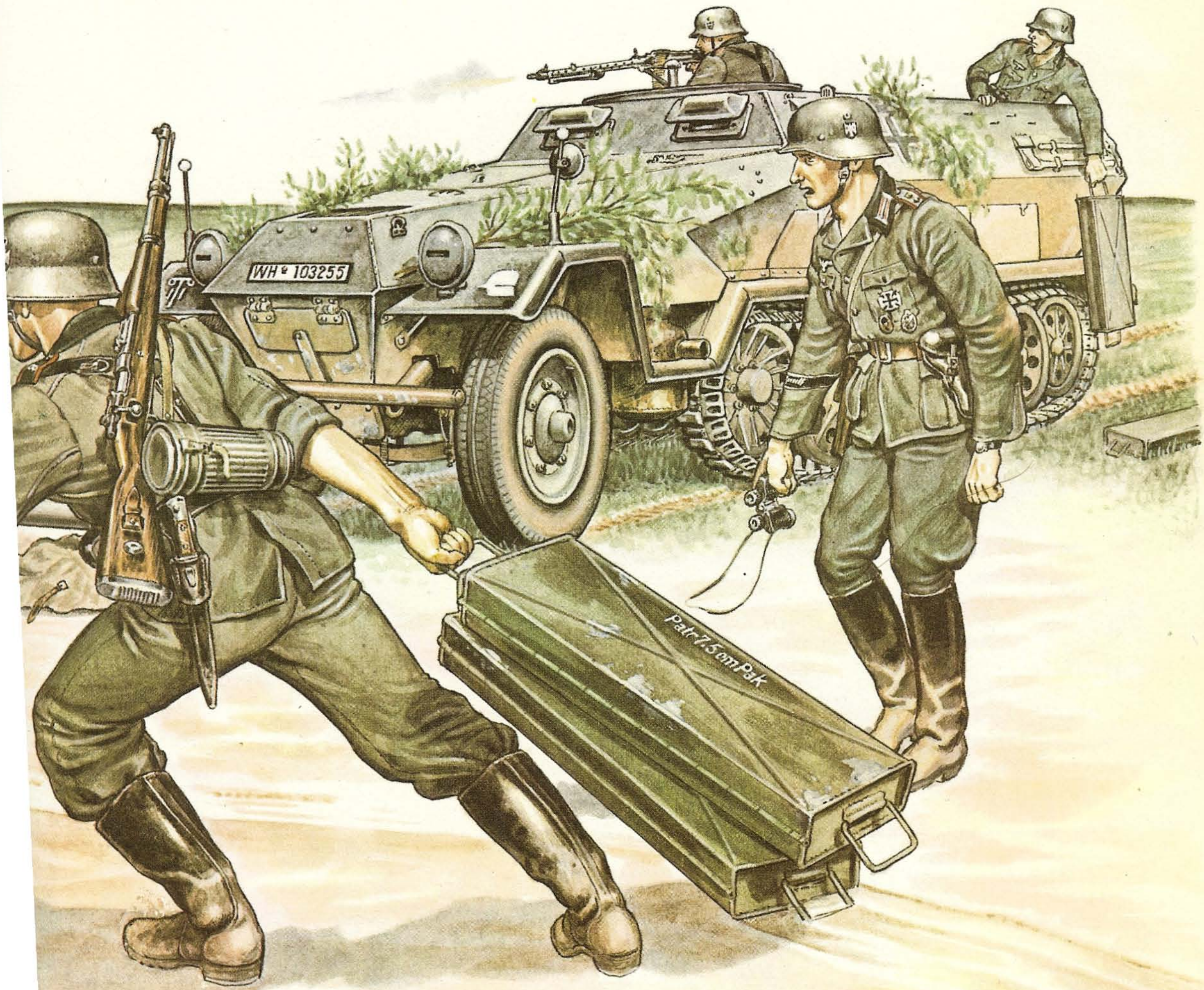

GOTT MIT UNS
A16

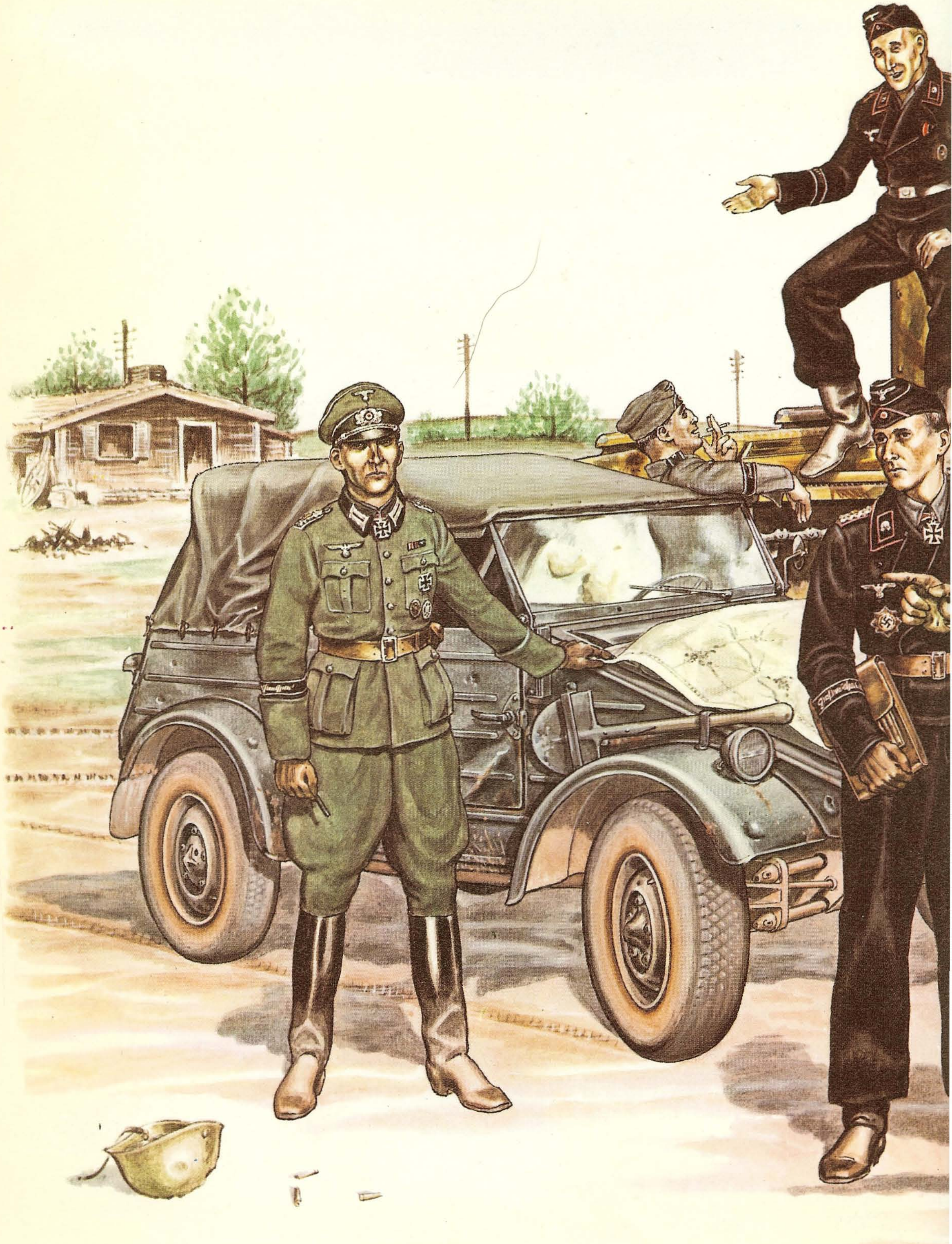

A17

A

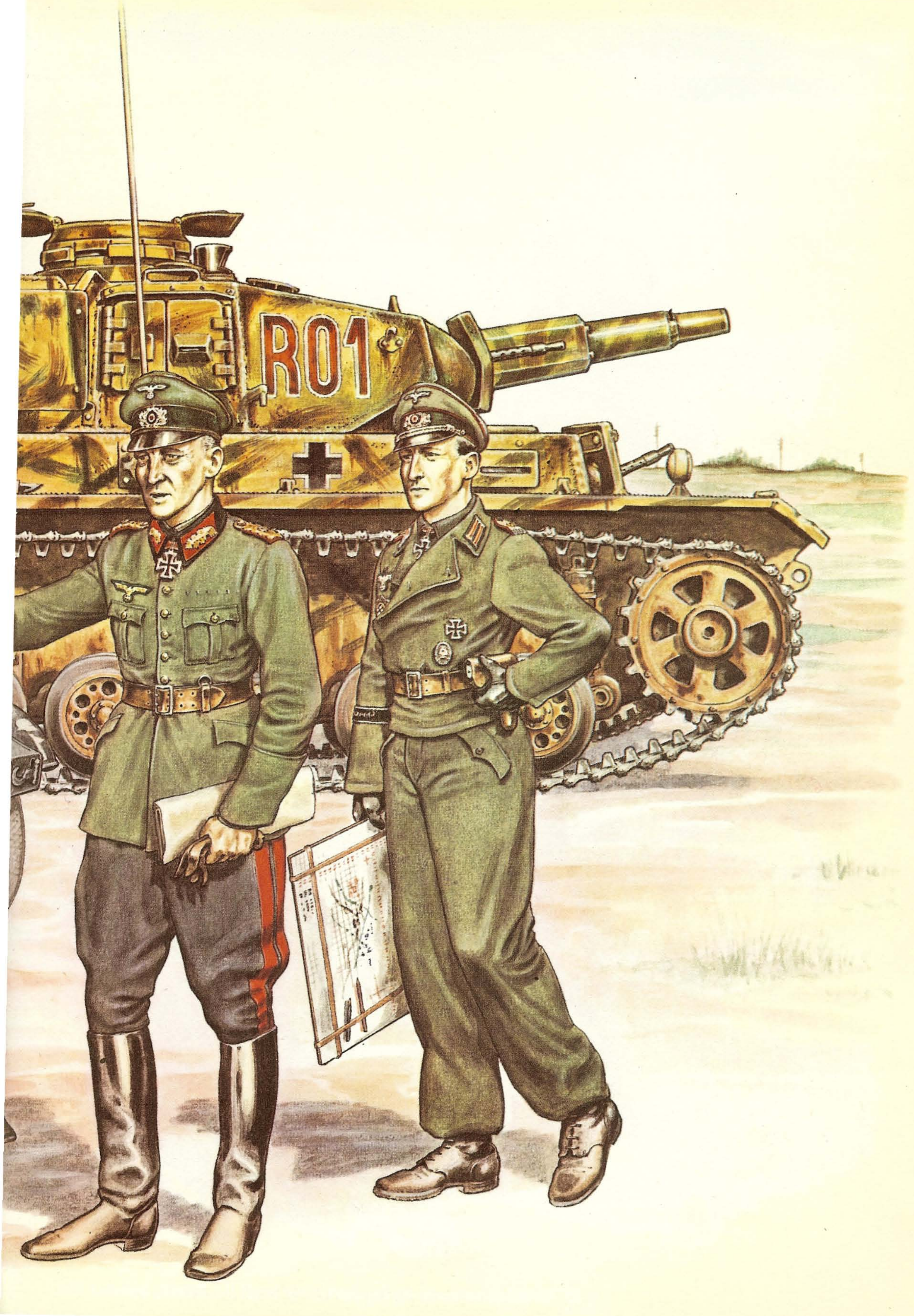


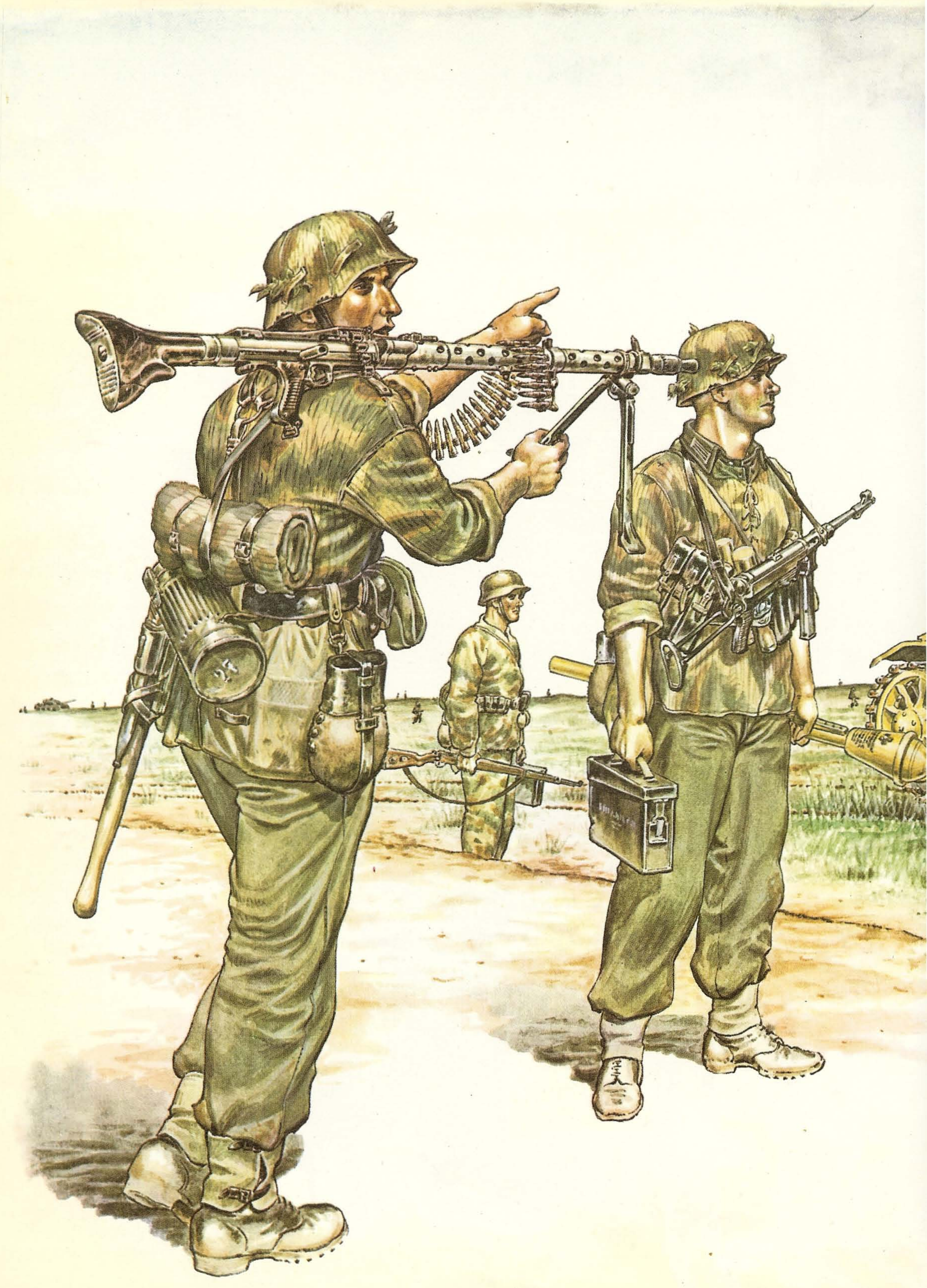
B PaK 40 anti-tank gun in action, Russia, 1942


WH 103255
Patr 7.5cm Pak

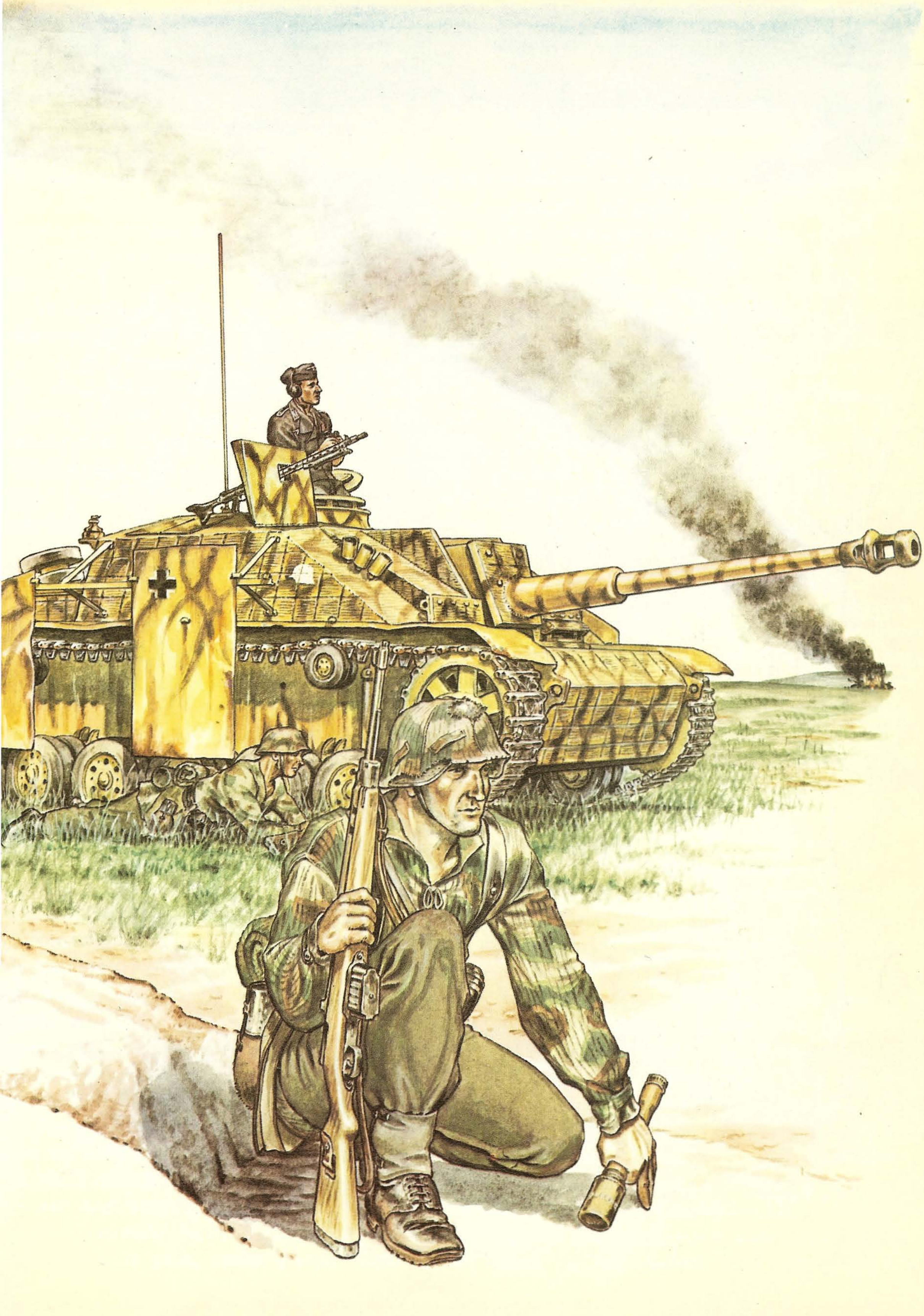


C Divisional orders group, Kursk, summer 1943

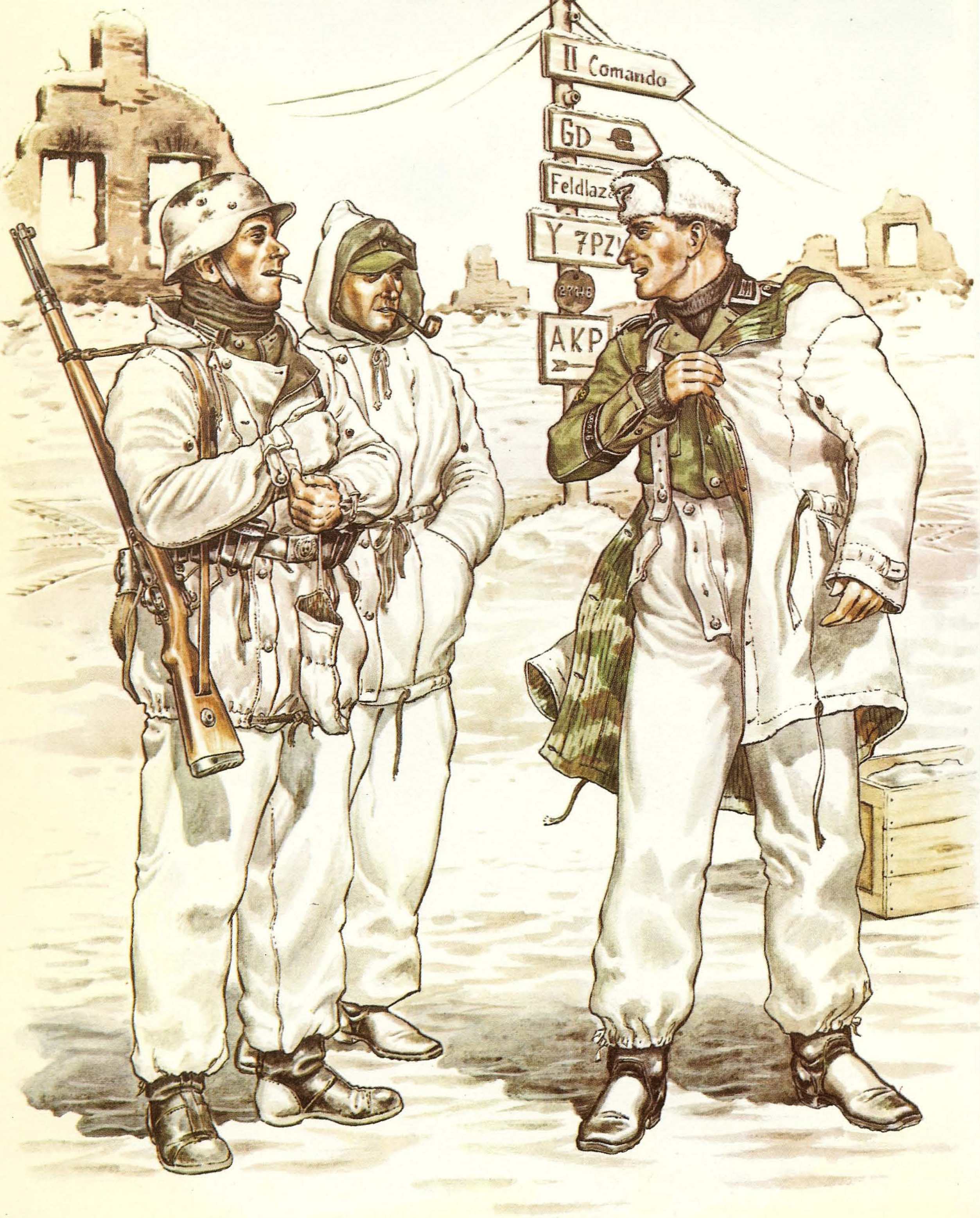

R01



D Grenadiers move up supported by StuG III, Kursk, summer 1943



E Winter clothing issue, winter 1943-44


II Comando
GD
Feldlaz
Y 7PZ
27148
AKP

covers were made available to cover them.

The *Dienstanzug* was normally worn over straight trousers with two slanting front pockets and a third pocket on the right hip. Initially these were of a darker grey than the tunic's field grey, but after 1942 war economies forced the use of cheaper material which was dyed the same field grey. The trousers could either be worn tucked into the high marching boots, or, later in the war, worn with the more comfortable ankle boots and anklets. Trousers for Panzer crews were of special cut, in black material.

Due to the economies forced on the German war industry, from 1943 a new, simplified, tunic began to appear, known as the 1943 Service Tunic (*Feldbluse*). This differed from the *Dienstanzug* in having a plain field grey collar without the dark blue-green facing; and plain pockets unpleated with straight flaps instead of the earlier three-pointed version. In 1944 this process of simplification was taken even further with the introduction of the 1944 *Feldbluse*. This was waist-length and had just two breast pockets. It also had a wider, simpler, collar in plain grey, and six buttons down the front. In general appearance it closely resembled a British battledress blouse, or one of the short denim jackets so fashionable today. For summer wear, a denim jacket was, in fact, available. Similar in style to the 1943 *Feldbluse*, but with pleated pockets, it was manufactured in reed green denim and, being light, proved very popular.

A wide number of variations on all these basic styles existed, although differences were mainly of detail only. For further information readers are recommended to Brian L. Davis's excellent book, *German Army Uniforms and Insignia 1933–1945*.

Two types of shirt were worn under all styles of jacket: a field grey cotton garment with two breast pockets; or a warmer, woollen, mouse-grey version without pockets. The shirt collar was normally worn open in the field, although Knight's Cross holders did theirs up to support their medal ribbon around the neck.

Panzer crews and self-propelled gun personnel wore a unique short, double-breasted service tunic in black or field grey material respectively. These smart and very practical garments had wide collars, normally worn open. Panzer crews wore black, edged pink, collar patches bearing the *Totenkopf* (death's head) device in white metal. Some Panzer Jäger crews also wore the *Totenkopf*, but on a dark blue-green patch with red *Waffenfarbe*, or alternatively normal artillery patches. Both types of jacket had the usual shoulder straps in black or field-grey respectively, with appropriate *Waffenfarbe* and rank insignia. Reed-green denim jackets, and trousers, of identical cut, were also utilized by tank and SPG crews.

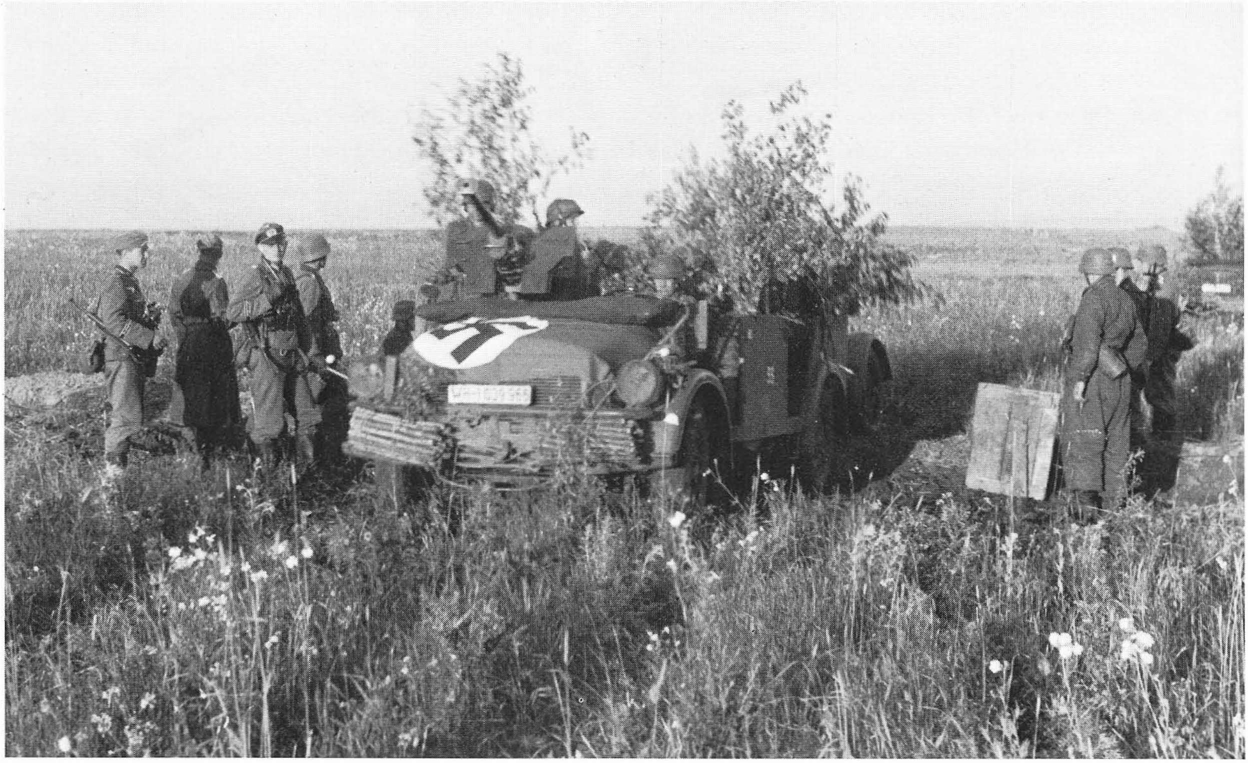
In addition to the field tunics, all German army personnel were also issued with a field-grey greatcoat. Once again, there were a variety of styles, but the most commonly used throughout the war was a double-breasted woollen coat which reached to below the knees. It had a dark blue-green collar and two slanting pockets, with two rows of six buttons down the front, and deep turned-back cuffs. Fur-lined and leather variants, normally worn by officers, also existed.

A variety of camouflage tunics, smocks and other over-garments could also be worn. These included an anorak with three pockets horizontally across the chest; a lightweight reversible camouflage smock with two-tone green and brown splinter pattern on one side and plain white on the other, worn with or without trousers of the same design; a reversible camouflaged 'body apron' which was drawn over the head and tied at the sides with tapes; the waterproof *Zeltbahn*, a triangular-shaped poncho printed in camouflage pattern on both sides (several could be joined together to make a temporary tent); and the reversible white/mouse-grey winter uniform. This comprised a heavy over-jacket, with or without a hood, and trousers, lined with blanket material. Since these winter uniforms tended to be worn continuously for weeks on end they soon became filthy, and the whole object of the white camouflage was defeated, so light white cotton one or two-piece coveralls were supplied as well. A white camouflage face mask was also available, and used mainly by snipers.

For winter wear, overboots made of felt or even improvised from straw were often used.

Badges and insignia

The most important identifying feature worn by all members of the 'Grossdeutschland' Division was a special cuff band, 3·2cm wide, 15cm up the right arm on all jackets and greatcoats (except



26 An unusual real-life 'conversion'—an Auto-Union-Horch medium car fitted with a tapered-bore sPzB 41 2·8cm anti-tank gun. Note the aerial recognition flag draped over the vehicle's bonnet.

camouflage smocks). Several variants of this existed. The first, originated in March 1939, was a dark-green band with silver edging and the title 'Grossdeutschland' in silver Gothic lettering. This was replaced in May 1940 by a black band with the lettering 'Inf.-Regt. Grossdeutschland'. The final variants, also in silver on black, were introduced in October 1940 and bore the simple legend 'Grossdeutschland' again, one version in Gothic lettering and the other in German Sütterlin script which is totally indecipherable to English eyes. These two cuff bands were also worn by all members of the Führer Begleit (Escort) Battalion (later Brigade). The 'GD' device worn on the shoulder straps and mentioned earlier was introduced in July 1939.

NCO's rank chevrons were worn on the upper left sleeve, a single silver-grey 'V' on a dark-green triangular patch for Gefreiters and a double 'V' for Obergefreiters.

In addition, various trade, specialist and proficiency badges could be worn by all ranks below Leutnant. These were usually symbolic devices embroidered in yellow on a dark blue-green circular or oval patch and, with a couple of exceptions, were worn on the lower right sleeve. A full list appears in Brian Davis's book mentioned earlier, but those most likely to interest readers of this book are the signals badge, a Gothic letter 'M' above a horizontal lightning flash; the medical badge, a yellow staff and serpent; radio operator, six lightning strokes radiating from a central hub; tank mechanic, a pink cogwheel on a field-grey circular patch; gun layer, a 'flaming' shell surrounded by an oakleaf wreath; and *Nebelwerfer* operator, a white mortar bomb surrounded by white oakleaves. There were many more than this far too numerous to describe here, including even a special badge for pigeon-post masters! In the 'Grossdeutschland' Division these specialist badges were worn just above the armband.

Army marksmanship lanyards of plaited aluminium cords were worn from the right shoulder but would not have been seen under active service conditions. Of more importance were the badges for the single-handed destruction of tanks and aircraft. The former, comprising a rectangular patch in silver corded cloth bordered with black stripes top and bottom, and containing a black tank device in the centre, was instituted after the beginning of the Russian campaign. When a soldier became an 'ace' with the destruction of five enemy tanks he received a badge of identical design but in gold. A similar badge, containing an aircraft motif, was introduced in January 1945 for the single-handed destruction of a low-flying aircraft using a weapon of less than 12mm calibre.

Snipers' badges, comprising a black eagle's head rising from a wreath of three green oakleaves on an oval patch of grey cloth, were awarded for 20, 40 and 60 kills, the latter having silver and gold borders respectively. These were worn in the same position as trade badges.

Equipment and Weapons

Personal equipment

The basic field equipment throughout the war consisted of a system of straps in black leather called 'D' ring, 'Y' straps. Two vertical straps were attached to the front of the wearer's belt at the front, passing over each shoulder and meeting between the shoulder blades where they were joined to a single strap attached to the centre of the belt at the back, giving the 'Y' appearance.

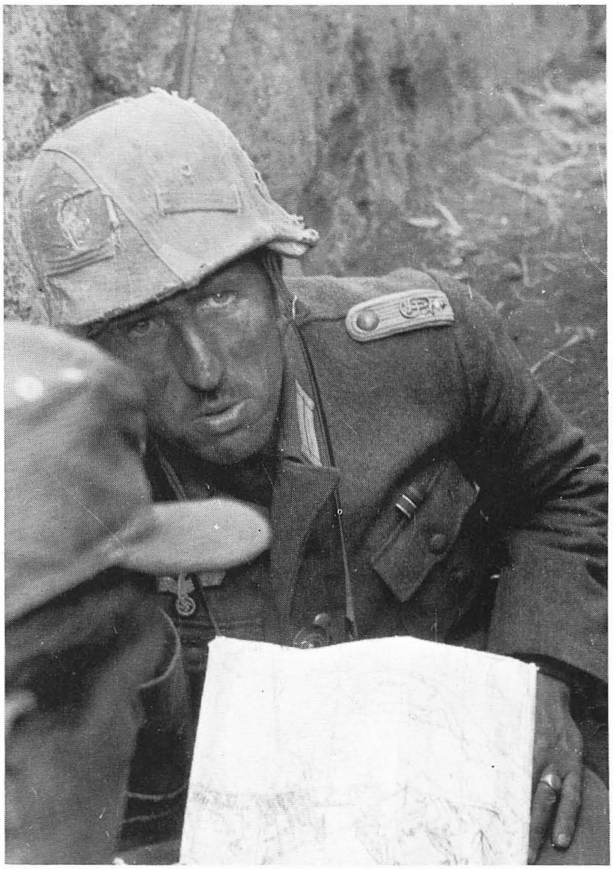
On his back the German infantryman would normally wear either the marching equipment, comprising a large hide pack with rolled greatcoat or, in action, just a mess tin in the centre of his back with either his greatcoat or camouflage poncho rolled beneath it. The cylindrical gas mask container, of field-grey painted metal, could be worn on the left or right side of the belt at the rear. The water bottle could similarly be worn on either side. The canvas bread bag was normally worn on the right, beneath the water bottle or gas mask container as appropriate, but the entrenching tool, in its leather case, was almost invariably worn on the left.

Ammunition pouches of various types carrying clips of rifle ammunition or magazines for MP40 sub-machine guns or MP44 assault rifles could be attached to the front of the belt on one or both sides, with or without a holster for an automatic pistol. The bayonet was carried in a sheath attached to the entrenching tool harness. Map cases and binoculars were normally only carried by NCOs and officers.

Infantry weapons

This is a specialized field of study which can only be outlined here. Standard side-arms were either the '08, 9mm Luger, '38, 9mm Walther or 7·65mm Walther PP and PPK, but the double-action 7·65mm Sauer or the advanced 7·65mm Mauser HSc could also be seen even though these were basically commercial rather than military designs. All except the Sauer had eight-round magazines—the Sauer had seven—and effective range of all types was about 50 yards.

A seventh type was the 27mm Walther signal pistol which could fire either flares or grenades. A later development of this, the *Kampfpistole*, had a detachable shoulder stock and sights, and was



27 The stress of battle is vividly etched on the face of this Oberleutnant discussing a situation in a trench during the battle of Kursk. Note the shoulder strap insignia and the camouflaged cloth helmet cover.

capable of firing special hollow-charge armour-piercing grenades.

The standard infantry weapon for most of the war was the Mauser Kar 98K rifle of 7·92mm calibre, a bolt-operated short-barrelled weapon with a five-round magazine and an effective range of 600–800 yards. This was supplemented by the 7·92mm Gewehr 33/40 carbine which was essentially the same, with a shorter barrel; the semi-automatic Gewehr 41 (W) with a ten-round magazine, which suffered from mechanical unreliability, especially in the wet; and the gas-operated Kar 43 carbine which also had a ten-round magazine.

The most common German sub-machine gun was the 9mm MP40, often inaccurately referred to as a 'Schmeisser', a very popular weapon which took a 32-round magazine and had an effective range of up to 200 yards.

Finally there were two basic types of assault weapon, the MP43 and MP44, which combined the best features of a conventional rifle (range) and sub-machine gun (magazine capacity). Both were of 7·92mm calibre and manufactured chiefly from steel stampings for ease of assembly and low cost. Gas operated, they both carried 30-round curved magazines giving a rate of fire (on semi-automatic) of around 50 rounds per minute, and had effective ranges of up to 400 yards.

German infantry were unquestionably equipped with the best machine guns of the last war, the dual-purpose 7·92mm MG34 and MG42 (indeed, the modern Bundeswehr is still partially equipped with a derivative of the latter).

Both of these weapons could be fitted with belt or drum magazines and bipod, tripod or anti-aircraft mounts for use in the light, heavy or AA machine gun roles. The MG42 was virtually identical in appearance to the MG34 apart from its barrel sleeve, this resulting from simplified manufacture and a reduced reliance on machined components. Both types had very high rates of fire, up to an incredible 1,000 rounds per minute (although 600–850 was more usual to prevent excessive barrel wear); the effective ranges were up to about 3,500 yards in the heavy MG configuration, or up to 600 in the light.

28 A young machine-gunner photographed during the summer of 1944. The belt buckle is particularly clear here. His weapon is the MG 42 and a belt of ammunition is already fixed for instant use. A cluster of Model 39 'egg' grenades hangs from his belt.

29 A Feldwebel checks over a Panzerfaust with a young grenadier, summer 1944. The badge for the single-handed destruction of an enemy tank is very clearly seen on his right sleeve.

Two types of hand grenade were standard issue, carried clipped to or tucked through the belt or in canvas satchels: the egg grenade (*Eierhandgranate*) Model 39 and the stick grenade (*Stielhandgranate*) Model 39. The former was a simple egg-shaped container filled with just under 4oz of high explosive and having a delay of four to five seconds. The latter contained 7oz of explosive in a cylindrical case screwed on to the end of a hollow wooden handle, and also had a delay of four to five seconds. Effective burst radii were approximately 10 and 20 yards respectively.

In addition, both anti-personnel and hollow-charge anti-tank grenades could be fired from special attachments on the barrels of rifles and carbines. The former contained a small filling of penthrite wax explosive which only gave a burst radius equivalent to the ordinary egg grenade, but was a useful weapon since it could be fired to a range of around 500 yards. There were half a dozen different types of armour-piercing grenade containing anything from 1·75 to 5·16oz of explosive, with effective ranges varying from 50 to 200 yards and armour-piercing capabilities of up to 125mm. Smoke and signal flares could also be fired from rifle adaptors.

Even more effective in the anti-tank role were the 8·8cm Racketenpanzerbüchse, or 'Panzerschreck', and the Panzerfaust. The former was a weapon

30 General Walter 'Papa' Hoernlein, who commanded first the Infantry Regiment 'Grossdeutschland' and later the entire division until he was succeeded by Manteuffel at the beginning of 1944.

31 In playful mood, Oberst Horst Kiemacs, commander of the Panzer Fusilier Regiment 'GD', 1944.

closely modelled on American bazookas captured in Tunisia, and first made its appearance in 1943. It was a hollow-charge anti-tank weapon propelled from a simple launching tube by a short-duration solid fuel rocket engine and stabilized in flight by drum fins at the rear. Maximum range was up to 220 yards and the weapon was capable of penetrating the armour plate of any Allied tank except the heaviest Russian designs. However, it was not particularly accurate. The Panzerfaust was a similar self-propelled hollow-charge device fired from a disposable launcher usually held tucked into the armpit, but was even less accurate and shorter-ranged, early models only being capable of 30 yards although later versions could manage 80. Because it was simpler and cheaper to construct than the Panzerschreck, the Panzerfaust became the principal German infantry anti-tank weapon after 1943, and was again capable of destroying or seriously damaging any tank in existence. The only safeguard against hollow-charge weapons of this nature was a skirt or screen around vulnerable parts of a vehicle, which exploded the grenade harmlessly outside the main armour. Surprisingly, while the Germans went to some lengths to protect their vehicles—especially the PzKpfw IV—in this way, very few Allied or Soviet tanks were so equipped.

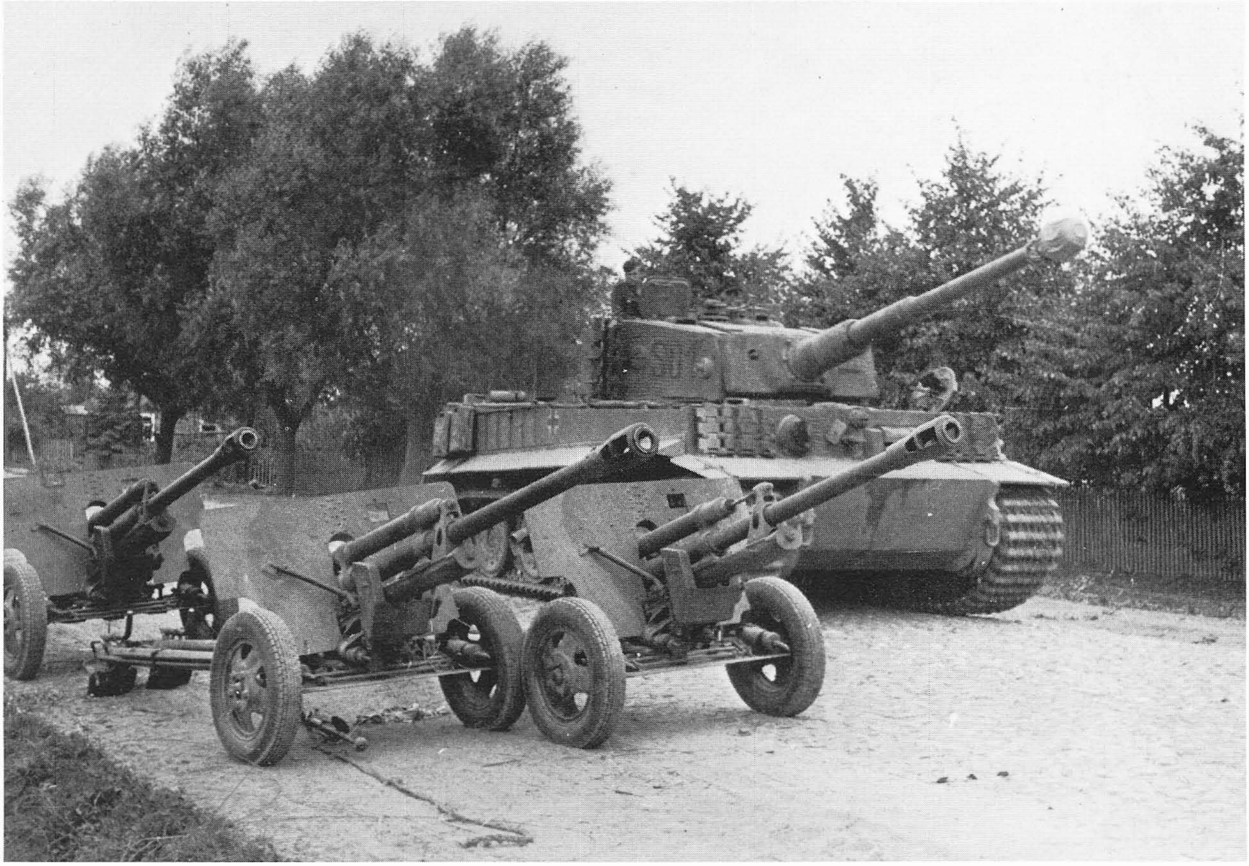
The principal German infantry 'heavy' weapons were the 5cm le.Gr.W 36, 8cm Gr.W 42 and 10cm Nb 35 mortars, although the former was relegated to second-line service after 1942 and for most of the war the 8cm weapon was the mainstay. Requiring a crew of three, it could fire a 7·72lb bomb up to 1,200 yards. Later in the war a 12cm mortar, also designated Gr.W 42, also appeared. It was virtually a copy of the Russian Model 38 mortar which had greatly impressed the German military with its range and effectiveness, and could fire a 39lb bomb up to 6,600 yards.

Tanks and other vehicles

The first SPG with which the 'Grossdeutschland' Regiment was equipped, in 1940, was the Sturmgeschütz III. This was a conversion from the PzKpfw III tank mounting a short-barrelled 7·5cm gun in a limited traverse mount, although later versions of the StuG III were also built to carry either a 10·5cm gun for the infantry support and assault role, or a long-barrelled 7·5cm weapon in the anti-tank role. With a track weight varying between 22 and 24 tons, the StuG III carried a crew of four, had a range of up to 102 miles, maximum armour thickness of 50mm and a top cross-country speed of 15mph.

When the 'Grossdeutschland' Division first acquired tanks in early 1942 they were principally of two types: the PzKpfw IIIN, the last variant of the series, mounting a short-barrelled 7·5cm gun; and the PzKpfw IVF2 with a long-barrelled weapon of the same calibre. By this time, the PzKpfw III was really on its last legs as a main battle tank, but still a useful weapon with 50mm frontal armour and a cross-country speed of around 12mph, although its relatively narrow tracks rendered it unsuitable for the Russian mud and snow. The PzKpfw IV was a more flexible design and saw service throughout the war, being progressively up-armoured and up-gunned to meet changing conditions (the soundness of the basic design is reflected in the fact that a few were still being used by the Syrians in 1973, along with Soviet T-34s!). The IVF2 was the first version to mount the long-barrelled 7·5cm KwK 40 gun which could fire up to ten aimed rounds a minute and pierce 85mm of armour plate at its usual effective range of 800 yards. The later IVH mounted a 7·5cm gun with an even longer barrel which could pierce 90mm at 900 yards, and was itself protected by additional armoured 'skirts' around its turret and hull sides as a defence against hollow-charge weapons. The PzKpfw IV carried a crew of five, had a range of 125 miles, maximum armour thickness of 80mm and a top cross-country speed of 10mph.

32 A Tiger I moves up past a trio of captured Soviet 76·2mm anti-tank guns.



34 SdKfz 251 command vehicle belonging to Oberst Lorenz (right), who took over command of the division from Manteuffel in September 1944.

The next tank the division acquired was the Tiger I in January 1943. Certainly the most famous, though not the best, of German wartime tanks, this lumbering and unmanoeuvrable monster weighed no less than 55 tons, but had armour plate 100mm thick and mounted a version of the famous 8·8cm dual-purpose gun which Rommel had used so effectively in the anti-tank role in the desert. Despite its weight, the Tiger's cross-country speed was better, at 13mph, than that of the PzKpfw III or IV due to its wide tracks, but its interleaved road wheels tended to get clogged with mud or ice, rendering it immobile. It was a good defensive tank but it was too unwieldy to prove a useful all-round battle tank. Nevertheless, the fact that its main gun could penetrate 95mm of armour plate at 1,500 yards range made it highly respected by all who encountered it.

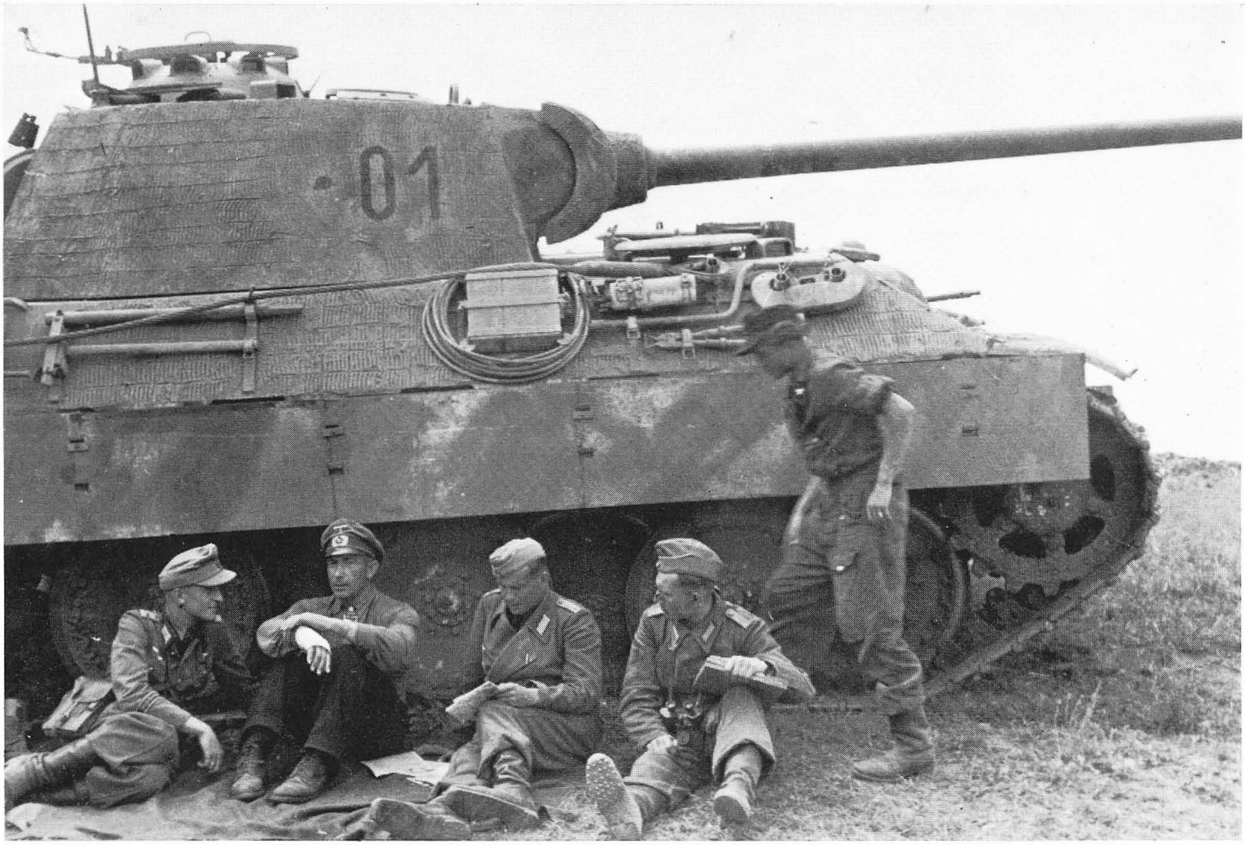
The first German attempt to design a 'modern' tank bore fruit in 1943 with the appearance of the PzKpfw V Panther in time for the battle of Kursk. Based to a large extent on the proven Russian T-34 design, the Panther featured thick and well-sloped armour plate but was underpowered and mechanically unreliable. However, it was faster than the Tiger (15mph cross-country) while its armour plate, although only 80mm thick compared to the Tiger's 100, gave comparable protection thanks to its design. Although it mounted only a 7·5cm gun, this was the KwK 42 L/70 version which was faster-firing and capable of penetrating over 100mm of enemy armour at 1,000 yards range because of its very high muzzle velocity.

Other important self-propelled guns in the 'Grossdeutschland's' inventory included the Marder II and III, conversions of obsolete PzKpfw II or PzKpfw 38(t) chassis to mount either 7·5cm Pak 42 or 76·2mm Pak 36(r) anti-tank guns in fixed open-topped fighting compartments; the Wespe, a conversion of the PzKpfw II again, but this time mounting a 10·5cm gun for artillery support; the Hummel, which was a 15cm gun mounted on a hybrid PzKpfw III/IV chassis; and the Hetzer, which many people consider the finest tank destroyer of the war, which was another conversion from the PzKpfw 38(t) carrying a 7·5cm Pak 39 on a limited traverse mount within a fully enclosed armoured fighting compartment.

33 General Hasso von Manteuffel (left) with divisional artillery commander Major Krieg (right). The officer in the centre of the picture wears slip-on covers over his shoulder straps. Manteuffel and the man in the centre both wear the soft-topped 'old style' officer's field cap. Major Krieg wears the popular *Einheitsfeldmütze*, introduced in June 1943, without *Waffenfarbe* chevron.

All German tanks at the beginning of the war were painted a uniform *Panzergrau*, a dark-grey colour incorporating a shade of blue, but after 1942 they began appearing in an alternative sandy yellow shade which had originally been used in North Africa and was found to be particularly useful on the Russian steppes. Both the basic grey and yellow could be overpainted with various camouflage designs in the red-brown and dark-green colours which were issued to units to apply as they liked—and which resulted in an impossible diversity of schemes ranging from the highly artistic to the downright crude. Whitewash was also widely used as snow camouflage.

The divisional sign—a white silhouette of a *Stahlhelm*—was normally applied to both front and rear of armoured and unarmoured vehicles, but there were no standard rules for its position and it could appear anywhere from the mudguards of tanks to the upper superstructures of self-propelled guns. Similarly with tactical insignia, which were



35 Oberst Langkeit (second from left), commander of the Panzer Regiment 'GD'; conferring with other officers beside his PzKpfw V Panther tank. Langkeit was later promoted to Major General and given command of the Panzer-Grenadier Division 'Kurmark' in 1945.

also normally white or yellow, and which were painted on the most appropriate flat surface. National crosses in three main styles but a variety of sizes appeared on the upper hull sides of most vehicles, sometimes, but far from always, accompanied by identification numbers or letters in white, black, red or various combinations. The name 'Grossdeutschland' itself also appears infrequently, usually painted under or alongside the *Stahlhelm* device.

Probably the most important vehicles in the 'Grossdeutschland's' inventory, however, were not its tanks but its armoured half-tracks, the forerunners of today's fully armoured personnel carriers which are designed to bring infantry up under fire to a position where their own weapons can become effective. The best-known of all German armoured half-tracks is, of course, the SdKfz 251, frequently, but incorrectly, known as the 'Hanomag'. The 251 was a good general purpose vehicle, capable of carrying ten combat troops in relative safety from small-arms fire at least, across country at 15mph, but as with so many other German vehicles, its narrow tracks made it a brute to handle in wet, muddy or frozen conditions. The fact that it was open-topped rather than fully enclosed also made it vulnerable to enemy artillery and mortar fire. But for full details of this and all the other weapons and vehicles used by the division, the reader is recommended to one of the many specialized books in print on these subjects.

The Plates

Badges and insignia

A1 National Eagle

Worn on the right breast of army jackets, the eagle, surmounting the swastika within a wreath, was silver-grey on a dark blue-green patch. A simplified version on a triangular patch was introduced for wear with the 1944 *Feldbluse*.

A2, 3 Helmet shields

The shield on the left was worn on the right side of the *Stahlhelm* and the one on the right was worn on the left. (A2 is the national tricolour and A3 another variant of the national eagle.) These badges gradually dropped out of use and were not applied to the 1943 helmet at all.

A4, 5 Cuff titles

These were the two principal versions of the 'Grossdeutschland' cuff title, A5 being in Gothic script. These two cuff titles were introduced in October 1940 to replace the earlier one which had been black with the wording 'Inf.-Regt. Grossdeutschland'. Both hands were 3·2cm wide and were worn 15cm up the right sleeve of service tunics and greatcoats, but not camouflage smocks.

A6–11 Shoulder straps

A6 depicts the shoulder strap of a grenadier (private); A7 Feldwebel (equivalent of a company sergeant major); A8 Leutnant (second lieutenant) of artillery troops; A9 Major of a Panzer unit; A10 Infantry Oberst (colonel); A11 General of Infantry.

A12–14 Collar patches

A12 Grenadier private; A13 Artillery Leutnant; A14 Major of a signals unit, full dress type on complete patch of *Waffenfarbe*.

A15 Totenkopf device

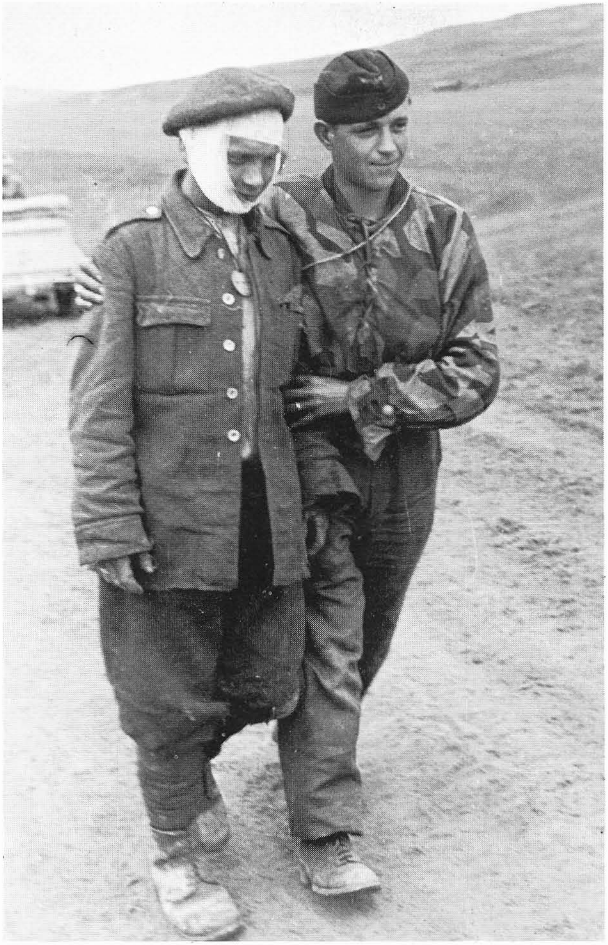
As worn on the collar patches of Panzer and some self-propelled artillery units. Either silver on a black patch with pink *Waffenfarbe* in the former case, or silver on a green patch with red *Waffenfarbe* in the latter.

A16 Other ranks belt buckle

A rectangular white metal plate bearing the legend 'GOT MIT UNS' (God with us) in a circle above oak leaves, with the national eagle and swastika in the centre. Worn by all NCOs and other ranks.

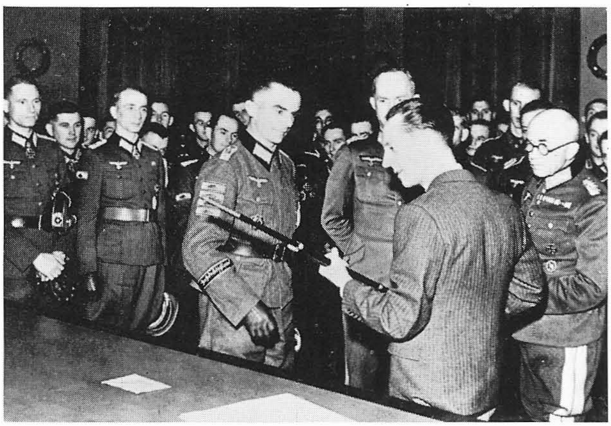
A17 General's collar patch

This is the collar patch as worn by a general of infantry. Very minor differences existed between the patches for Lieutenant General, Major General, General and Colonel General. A Field



36 A helping hand for a wounded ally. The soldier on the right wears the standard Wehrmacht lightweight reversible camouflage smock in green/brown splinter pattern.

37 Smartly dressed and glad of a break from the fighting, Hauptmann Konopka was one of several officers invited to discuss conditions at the front with Reichsminister Goebbels at the end of 1943; his cuff band and four 'tank killer' badges are clearly visible.



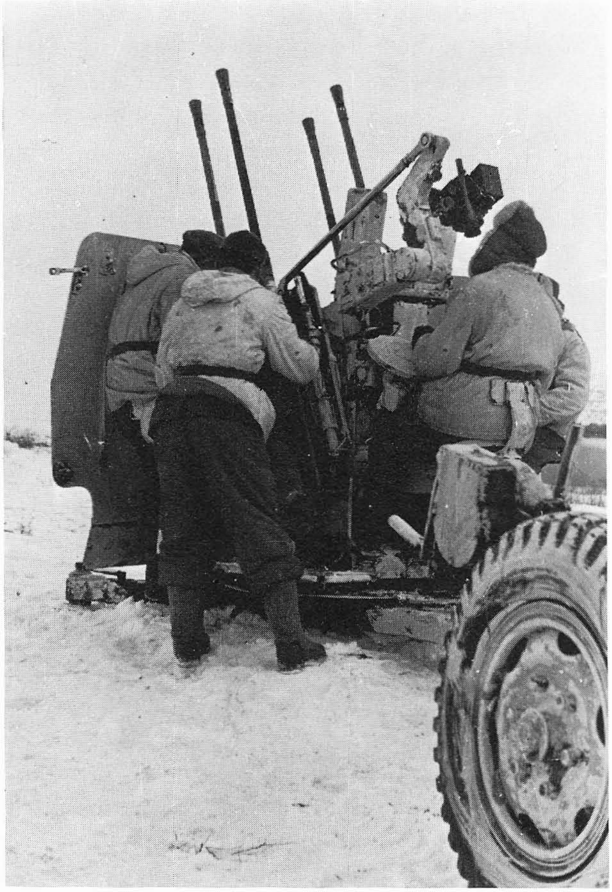
Marshal's collar patch was similar but with three instead of two 'fleur-de-lis' devices at top and bottom.

B Anti-tank gunners in action

This plate depicts a 7·5cm Pak anti-tank gun in action on the Eastern Front during the summer offensive of 1942, accompanied by its SdKfz 251 towing vehicle. The Pak 40 was one of the most successful German gun designs of the war. Its low-slung carriage made it a difficult target and relatively easy to conceal or dig in, while its 7lb shell, fired with a velocity of over 3,000 feet per second, was capable of piercing over 100mm of homogeneous armour plate at 500 yards' range. Its towing vehicle in this case is one of the ubiquitous SdKfz 251 armoured personnel carriers which were widely used by Panzer-Grenadiers throughout the Wehrmacht. Based on the chassis of the SdKfz 11 semi-tracked prime mover, the SdKfz 251 could carry a section of infantry in addition to its driver. Its cross-country speed was in the region of 15mph and it had a radius of action of over 80 miles. Its armour plate, which was only intended to protect the occupants from shell splinters and light small-arms fire, varied from six to 14·5mm in thickness. The members of the gun detachment shown here are wearing standard 1936-pattern tunics and, since they are in action, they are also all wearing steel helmets. They have artillery red *Waffenfarbe*, and are wearing the light assault equipment rather than full marching kit—this would be stowed in their vehicle. Note the range finder and its leather carrying case. The wounded gun layer wears his distinguishing badge on his lower left sleeve.

C Order Group planning session

This plate shows a group of officers from various arms of service discussing a situation beside a Kubelwagen light field car. Behind them is a PzKpfw III tank. The PzKpfw III was Germany's earliest really successful tank design, and soldiered on throughout the war although outclassed by the later variants of the PzKpfw IV and, of course, the Panther and Tiger. This plate shows the Ausf N, the last production variant, armed with a short-barrelled 7·5cm gun for the close-support role, in overall yellow with red-brown and green camouflage superimposed, during the Battle of Kursk in 1943. Its features were partial spaced-armour around the turret rear as well as the extra frontal armour which was standard on this version. The turret number 'ROI' identifies it as the commanding officer's vehicle of the 1st Battalion, Panzer Regiment 'GD'. The ubiquitous little Kubelwagen staff car and light reconnaissance car was a popular vehicle seen in wide service on all fronts. Designed by Volkswagen and given the army identification serial 'SdKfz 1', it was a conversion from the pre-war 'Peoples Car' and could carry four men. It had a speed of up to 50mph and radius of action of about 250 miles. In the centre of the discussion is General Walter Hoernlein, the divisional commander, wearing the old style field service cap which he favoured and usually wore without gold piping or other distinguishing adornments. Flanking him are a Major



38 Towards the end of the war Allied aerial superiority played havoc with German ground troops. One of the most effective weapons developed to counteract low-flying dive bombers and fighters was the quad 20mm Flakvierling, seen here in rough whitewash camouflage during the winter of 1944.

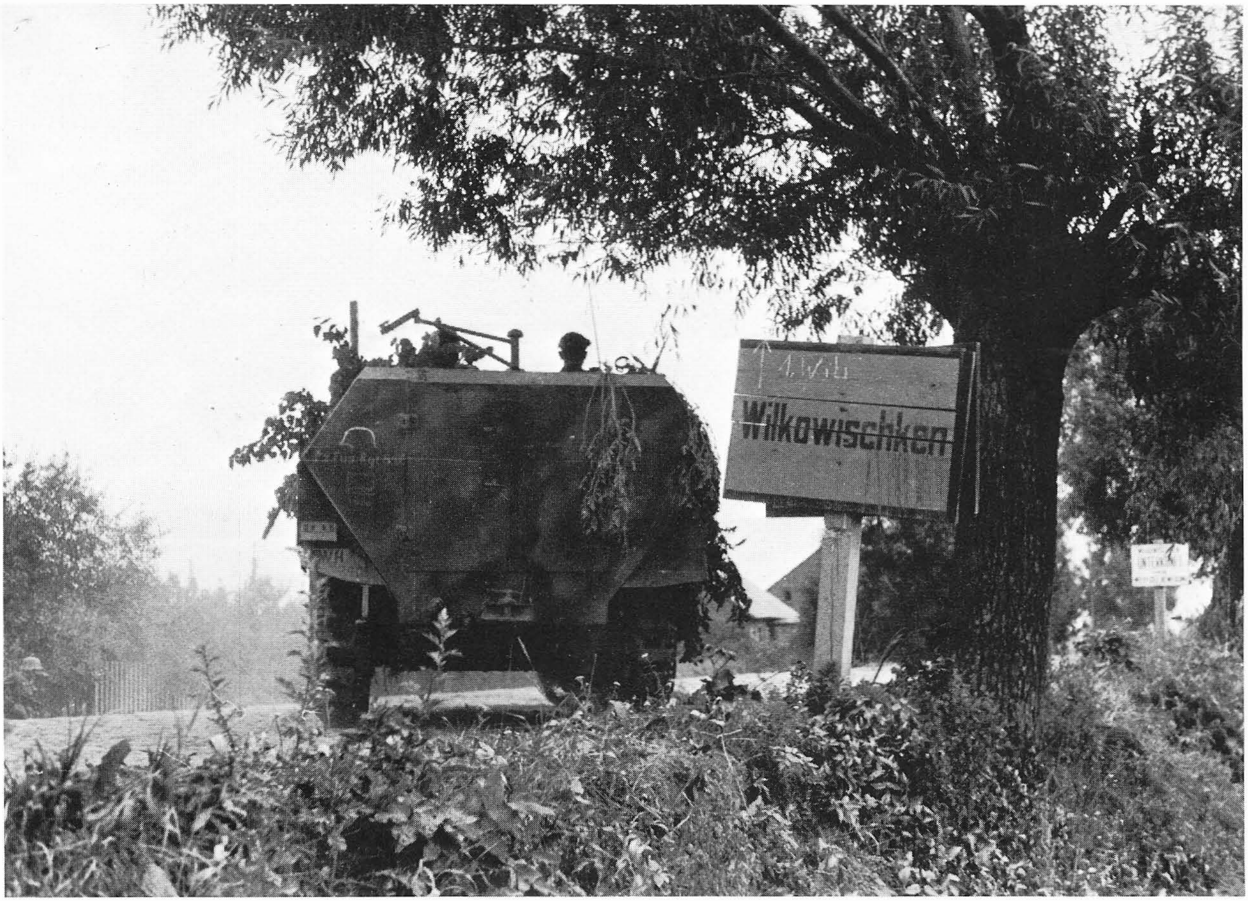
from the Panzer battalion in the standard black two-piece uniform; a Leutnant from a Sturmgeschütz battery in the self-propelled artillery crew uniform which was of the same cut as the Panzer suit but in field-grey instead of black; and a Major from a grenadier battalion. (Refer to the section on uniforms for further details.) Relaxing for five minutes while the officers confer, are one of the crew members from the PzKpfw III and the driver of the Kubelwagen.

D Grenadiers in the attack

Grenadiers from the 'Grossdeutschland' Division move up to the attack, supported by a StuG III, during Operation *Citadel*. The StuG III, which was a conversion from the PzKpfw III to allow it to carry a heavier gun, was officially classed as an assault gun (*Sturm* = storm, *Geschütz* = gun) although, when mounting the long-barrelled 7·5cm weapon as here, had a useful anti-tank capability. This vehicle has a very roughly applied camouflage pattern of brown over its basic dark-yellow finish, with the 'GD' device on its superstructure sides as shown in one of the photographs. The grenadiers are wearing summer camouflage smocks and helmet covers without insignia, and are carrying a variety of weapons including an MG34 machine gun, MP 40 sub-machine gun, Panzerfaust, Kar 98 and Kar 43 rifles, plus assorted grenades. The StuG is the Ausf G version and has, in addition to a liberal application of zimmerit anti-magnetic mine paste, side rails on to which armoured 'skirts' could be attached for protection against hollow-charge weapons.

E Winter clothing for the troops

Despite a shortage of adequate winter clothing for the troops in Russia during 1941, by the following year—when it had become obvious that Russia was



39 The outline of the 'GD's' '*Stahlhelm*' device can be seen on the back of this SdKfz 251. Underneath the helmet is the lettering 'Pz Fus Rgt GD' and the tactical device for a motorized infantry unit.

Großdeutschland

40 An unidentified Leutnant of a self-propelled gun unit wearing the standard field-grey jacket and old style field service cap. The vehicle appears to be a StuG III with additional *appliqué* armour plate.

not going to crumble overnight—German soldiers, particularly in elite formations such as the 'Grossdeutschland', received decent reversible jackets and over-trousers as described in the section on uniforms. In this illustration two men wear the thick, insulated, reversible white/mouse-grey garments with hoods, while the third is donning the reversible camouflage smock and trousers. One man has his hood up already, while the NCO has been lucky enough to acquire one of the fur-lined field service caps. The third has simply got an ordinary steel helmet whitewashed for camouflage, and reversible mittens attached to the jacket sleeves by tape.

Légendes

1 L'attribut de la division sur le brassard et les insignes sur l'épaulette, portés ici par un Unterfeldwebel. **2** Voitures en Russie, 1941, avec l'écusson de la division 'le casque d'acier'. On distingue aussi l'attribut de l'unité de la compagnie motocyclette du 3e Bataillon de Reconnaissance. **3** Le SdKfz 250 auto-chenille distribué à une section de l'infanterie. **4** Un mortier de 8cm engagé au combat. **5** PzKpfw III Ausf M char de combat de la division, sa peinture jaune foncé camouflée de vert ou de marron. **6** SdKfz 231 voiture de commandement portant les insignes du quartier général du Ie Bataillon de Reconnaissance Motorisé. **7** Voiture Horch avec insignes de la compagnie du quartier général d'un bataillon flak. **8** Prisonniers russes aident à pousser une motorcyclette. **9** Voitures du quartier général. Remarquez les insignes de commandement sur les pare-boues des motocyclettes. **10** Pièce anti-tank, Pak 40, en Russie, début 1943. Les servants portent la tenue de neige, deux-pièces, et les bonnets de toison.

11 Infanterie à Belgorod, janvier 1943, portant la tenue de neige à double face. **12** Obusier 7·5cm près de Kharkov, début 1943. **3** Les chars camouflés de blanc de chaux. Au premier plan on voit un PzKpfw III Ausf G ou H avec un Ausf F2. **14** Major von Wietersheim du Panzer Regiment. **15** Major Otto Remer, commandant de bataillon du Grenadier Regiment. **16** Le Leutnant Gerhard Konopka – remarquez les emblèmes sur la manche droite, en reconnaissance de ses abattements de chars. **17** Hauptmann Mangold, commandant du le Sturmgeschutz Abteilung. **18** Le General Balck rend visite à la division dans un Mercedes bien camouflé. **19** Défilé du Sturmgeschutz Abteilung en avril 1943, où Hauptmann Franz reçut les Feuilles de Chêne à la Croix de Chevalier. **20** Franz (à droite) avec Oberst von Natsuner (au centre), un général d'état-major avec les bandes rouges sur la culotte. Remarquez l'emblème de division peint sur le StuG III.

21 Le General Balck avec Major Possl du Panzer Regiment. **22** Les chars Tiger I transportés par chemin de fer pour l'offensive Kursk. Ils ont les chenilles étroites 'voyageurs'; les larges chenilles de bataille sont empilées en dessous des chars. **23** Les canons autopropulsés Wespe du le Battallion, Panzer Artillerie Regiment 'GD', Kursk, juillet 1943. Le camouflage est marron sur jaune; les insignes de division et d'unité se voient. **24** Un char PzKpfw IV Ausf F1 dépasse les prisonniers russes. **25** Un tracteur SdKfz 7 remorque une pièce de 8.8cm. **26** Voiture de Campagne Auto Union Horch équippée d'un canon anti-tank. **27** Un Oberleutnant photographié pendant la bataille de Kursk. **28** Un mitrailleur avec un MG42, été 1944. **29** Un Feldwebel en train de vérifier un Panzerfaust projecteur de grenades anti-tanks. **30** General Walter Hoernlein commandait le régiment d'infanterie et, par la suite, la division entière, avant que Hasso von Manteuffel lui prit la succession, début 1944.

31 Oberst Horst Kiemacs, commandant du Panzer Fusilier Regiment 'GD', 1944. **32** Un char Tiger I dépasse les canons soviétiques anti-tanks 76·2mm pris aux russes. **33** General von Manteuffel (à gauche) avec le commandant d'artillerie Major Krieg (à droite). **34** Oberst Lorenz (à droite) qui prit le commandement de la division en septembre 1944, dans sa SdKfz 251 voiture de commandement. **35** Oberst Langkeit (deuxième à gauche), commandant du Panzer Regiment, à côté de son char PzKpfw Panther. Langkeit commanda plustard la Kurmark Division en 1945. **36** Un soldat en blouson léopard réglementaire, tenue légère, vient à l'aide d'un allié blessé. **37** Hauptmann Konopka à une réception; il parle avec Reichsminister Goebbels. **38** Un canon anti-aérien quad-20mm en camouflage d'hiver, 1944. **39** SdKfz 251 auto-chenille avec l'emblème de division au-dessus des mots 'Pz Fus Rgt GD' et avec les insignes d'unité d'un bataillon d'infanterie motorisée. **40** Un Leutnant commandant un StuG III autopropulsé. Il est en tenue grise des troupes d' artillerie autopropulsée et porte 'la casquette de campagne, à l'ancienne mode, d'officier'.

Planches en couleur

A Attributs et Insignes: (1) Insigne national porté sur la poitrine. (2) et (3) Insignes portés du côté droit et gauche de casque d'acier jusqu'en 1943. (4) et (5) Les brassards de division portés toujours sur la manche droite par tous les grades; ici on voit les deux styles ancien et moderne, celui-ci étant introduit en octobre 1940. (6)–(11) Les épaulettes: (6) Grenadier (7) Feldwebel (8) Leutnant d' Artillerie (9) Panzer Major (10) Oberst d'Infanterie (11) General d'Infanterie. (12)–(14) Les écussons (12) Grenadier (13) Leutnant d'Artillerie (14) L'écusson de grande tenue, Major, troupes de transmissions. (15) L'attribut 'la tête de mort' porté sur les écussons des troupes de chars et de quelques unités d'artillerie autopropulsée. (16) Bouche de ceinture de soldat. (17) L'écusson de General.

B Equipage de pièce anti-tank, Russie, été 1942. L'arme est le 7·5cm Pak 40 avec SdKfz 251 remorqueuse. L'équipage est en tenue d'ordonnance de 1936 et porte les casques d'acier; observez le passepoil Waffenfarbe en rouge d'artillerie.

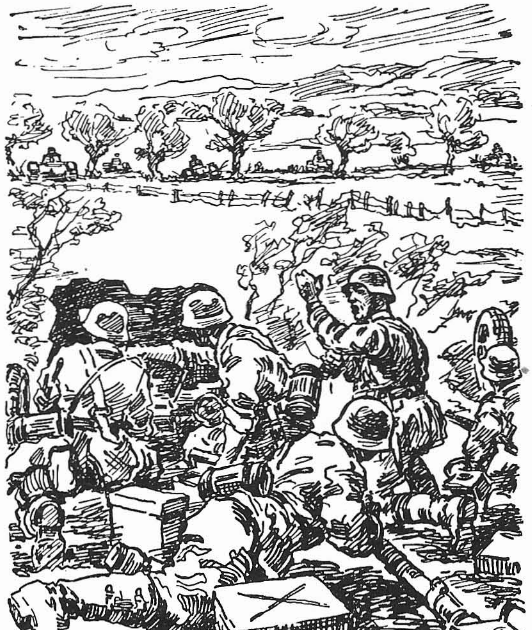
C Conférence d'officiers, Russie, été 1943. La voiture de campagne, dans le fond, est un Kubelwagen. Remarquez aussi le char PzKpfw III Ausf N avec la peinture en jaune de cette période, camouflé de roux ou de vert foncé – ou de tous les deux couleurs – l'initiative étant prise par l'unité. Le numéro sur la tourelle indique le char du commandant du ler Bataillon Panzer Regiment 'GD'. Au centre, General Hoernlein (sa tenue était habituellement assez simple) qui parle avec un Major du Panzer Regiment en tenue noire d'equipage de char, avec passepoil rose. A droite, un Leutnant du Sturmgeschutz Abteilung avec le même uniforme mais en gris. Un Major du Grenadier Regiment attend près de la voiture.

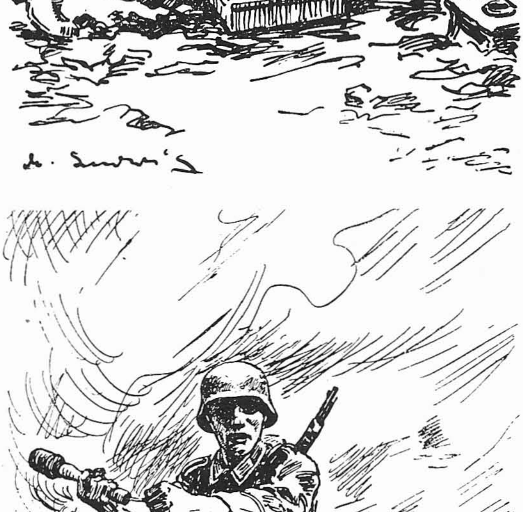
D Grenadiers à Kursk, 1943, avec un StuG III autopropulsé. Ils portent les blousons, sans cols, la tenue léopard, avec les couvre-casques du même tissu. Leurs armes comprennent la mitrailleuse MG34, la mitraillette MP40, le Panzerfaust et le Kar98, et les fusils Kar43.

E La tenue d'hiver réglementaire du 1943–44. L'uniforme deux-pièces d'hiver avait le tissu blanc d'un côté, et était doublé de tissu camouflé ou gris. Remarquez aussi le bonnet de campagne doublé de fourrure, les moufles et la casquette de campagne de 1943.

Überschrift

1 Divisionsärmelband und Schulterklappenabzeichen – hier von einem Unterfeldwebel getragen. **2** Fahrzeuge in Russland, 1941, mit dem Divisionsabzeichen – ein Stahlhelm. Das Einheitsabzeichen der Motorradkompagnie des 3. Aufklärungsbataillons is auch sichtbar. **3** Das SdKfz 250 Halbkettenfahrzeug. Die Infanterie de Division wurde zum Teil mit diesem Fahrzeug ausgerüstet. **4** Ein 8cm Mörser wird feuerbereit gemacht. **5** Eine PzKpfw III Ausf M der Division. Die Tarnfarben sind dunkelgelb und grün oder braun. **6** Ein SdKfz 231 Stabsfahrzeug mit dem Abzeichen der Stabskompanie, 1. Motorisierten Aufklärungsbataillon der Division. **7** Ein Horchfeldwagen mit dem Abzeichen der Stabskompanie eines FLA-bataillons. **8** Russische Kriegsgefangene schieben einen Motorrad. **9** Stabsfahrzeug. Die Kommandoabzeichen auf den Kotflügeln beachten! **10** PAK 40 in Russland, Frühjahr 1943. Die Besatzung tragen die zweiteiligen Schneetarnanzüge und Schaffellmützen.





11 Infanterie im Einsatz! Belgorod, Januar 1942. Sie tragen umkehrbare Tarnanzüge – hier die 'Schneeseite' nach aussen. **12** Eine 7,5cm leichte Haubitze in der Nähe von Kharkov, Frühjahr 1943. **13** Panzer; sie sind mit weisser farbe getarnt worden. Im Vordergrund ein PzKftw III Ausf. G oder H und eine Ausf. F2. **14** Major von Weitersheim vom Panzerregiment. **15** Major Otto Remer, Bataillonskommandeur im Grenadierregiment. **16** Der hochdekorierte Leutnant Gerhard Konopka. Das Panzervernichtungsabzeichen am rechten Ärmel beachten! **17** Hauptmann Mangold, Chef der 1. Sturmgeschützabteilung. **18** General Balck Besichtigt die Division in seinem getarnten Mercedes Stabsfahrzeug. **19** Die Parade der Sturmgeschützabteilung, April 1943 zum Feiern von der Überreichung an Hauptmann Frantz des Eichenlaubs zum Ritterkreuz. **20** Frantz (rechts) mit Oberst von Natsuner (mitte), ein Offizier im Generalstabsdienst – deshalb die roten Streifen an den Hosen. Das Divisionsabzeichen am StuG III bemerken!

21 General Balck mit Major Pössl vom Panzerregiment. 'Tiger I' Panzer werden für die Kurskoffensive per Bahn nach der Front gefördert. Die schmale 'Reiseraupen' sing anmontiert; die breiten 'Schlachtketten' liegen unter den Panzern auf den Eisenbahnwagens. **23** 'Wespe' selbstfahrende Kanonen vom 1. Bataillon, Panzerartillerieregiment 'GD', Kurstk, Juli 1943. Die Tarnfarben sind braun und gelb; Divisions- und Einheitsabzeichen beachten! **24** PzKpfw IV Auf. F1 stossen nach der Front vor! Sie fahren an einigen russischen Kriegsgefange nen vorbei. **25** Eine SdKfz 7 Zugmaschine mit der 8,8cm Mehrzweckkanone. **26** Ein Auto-Union Horchfeldwagen mit einer 2,8cm sPzB41 PAK ausgerüstet. **27** Ein Oberleutnant; das Bild wurde während der Schlacht von Kursk aufgenommen. **28** M.G. Schütze mit einem M-G 42; Sommer 1944. **29** Ein Feldwebel überprüft eine 'Panzerfaust' Panzerabwehrraketenabschussrampe **30** General Walter Hoernlein, zuerst Kommandeur des Infanterieregiments, später Divisionskommandeur bis zu seiner Ablösung durch Hasso von Manteuffel im Frühjahr 1944.

31 Oberst Horst Kiemacs, Kommandeur des Panzerfusilierregiments 'GD', 1944. **32** Ein 'Tiger I' Panzer stosst auf erbeutete russische 76,3mm PAK vor. **33** General von Manteuffel (linke) mit dem Divisionsartilleriekommaneur Major Krieg (rechts). **34** Oberst Lorenz (rechts) in seinem SdKfz 251 Stabsfahrzeug; er übernahm September 1944 die Division. **35** Oberst Langkeit (zweiter von links) neben seinem PzKpfw V 'Panther'; er war Kommandeur des Panzer regiments. Langkeit wurde später Kommandeur der 'Kurmark' Division, 1945. **36** Ein Landser in der vorschriftsmässigen Tarnjacke helft seinem verwundeten Kamerad. **37** Hauptmann Konopka unterhält sich be einem Empfang mit Reichsminister Goebbels. **38** Eine 20mm Vierling FLAKanone in Wintertarnung, 1944. **39** Ein SdKfz 251 Halbkettenfahrzeug. Den Umriss des Divisionsabzeichen über den Wörtern: 'PzFüs Rgt GD' und das taktsiche Abzeichen eines motorisierten Infanterieregiments beachten! **40** Ein Leutnant mit seinem StuG III. Er trägt die graue Uniform der Panzerartillerie und altmodische Offiziersfeldmütze.

Farbtafeln

A Wappen und Abzeichen (1) Hoheitsadler; an der rechten Brustseite getragen. (2) und (3) Stahlhelmabzeichen (rechts und links) be-vor 1943. (4) und (5) Divisionsärmelband – erstere und zweitere Aufführung (zweitere Oktober 1940 eingeführt) am rechten Arm von allen Soldaten getragen. (6) bie (11) Schulterklappen: (6) Grenadier, (7) Feldwebel, (8) Artillerieleutnant, (9) Panzermajor, (10) Infanterieoberst, (11) General der Infanterie. (12)–(14) Kragenspiegel: (12) Grenadier, (13) Artillerieleutnant, (14) Kragenspiegel der Galauniform eines Majors der Fernmeldetruppe. (15) Totenkopfkragenabzeichen der Panzertruppe und einiger Panzerartillerieeinheiten. (16) Soldaten Koppelschnalle. (17) Kragenspiegel eines Generals.

B PAK-Besatzung in Einsatz, Russland, Sommer 1942. Das Geschütz ist eine 7,5cm PAK 40 mit SdKfz 251 Zugmaschine. Die Besatzung trägt Uniformen und Stahlhelme M 1936. Die rote Artilleriewaffenfarbe bemerken!

C Befehlsausgabe, Russland, Sommer 1943. Im Hintergrund ein Kubelwagen (Feldwagen) und ein PzKpfw III Ausf. N, letzterer mit den Tarnfarben dunkelgelb und rotbraun oder dunkelgrün, je nach Belieben der Einheit. Die Turmnummer bedeutet: Kommandeur vom 1. Bataillon, Panzerregiment 'GD'. Die zusätzliche Panzerung an der vorderen Wannenseite und am Turmheck beachten! In der Bildmitte steht General Hoernlein in seiner gewöhnlich bescheidener Uniform; er unterhält sich mit einem Major vom Panzerregiment, in der schwarzen Panzeruniform mit rosarotem Vorstoss. Rechts ein Leutnant der Sturmgeschützabteilung. Seine Uniform ist vom Panzerschnitts, aber in grau. Baim Kubelwagen steht ein Major vom Grenadierregiment.

D Grenadiere bei Kursk, 1943, mit einem StuG III. Sie tragen kragenlose Tarnblusen mit Helmüberzüge vom Selben Stoff. Unter den Waffen sehen wir einem M-G34, M-P40, einen Panzerfaust und die 'Kar98' und 'Kar43' Gewehre. Das StuG III, Ausf. G hat Zusatzpanzerung an den Seiten der Wanne und ist, um die Haftung von magnetischen Panzerabwehrminen zu verhindern, mit Beton bestrichen worden.

E Die Winterbekleidung, 1943–44. Die zweiteilige Bekleidung war auf der einen Seite weiss und auf der anderen entweder grau oder getarnt. Die Schaffellmütze, die Fäustlinge und die M 1943 Feldmütze mit Schirm auch beachten!